FEB. 1
10¢

ALL-STORY LOVE

RED STAR MAGAZINE FEB. 1

Twice a Month

Tomorrow you marry another man—

Tonight You're Mine!

by

Frances Lake

—

Love in Reverse

Makes dangerous going. But you get nowhere in neutral

by

Vina Lawrence

NOTE HOW LISTERINE REDUCED GERMS: The two drawings above illustrate height of range in germ reductions on mouth and throat surfaces in test cases before and after gargling Listerine Antiseptic. Fifteen minutes after gargling, germ reductions up to 96.7% were noted; and even one hour after, germs were still reduced as much as 80%.

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Germ Reductions Up to 96.7%

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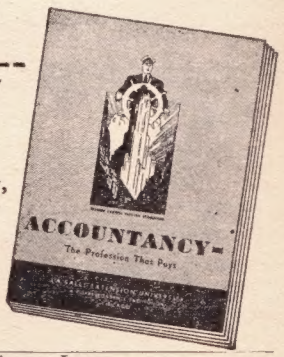

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Volume 87 Number 5

ALL-STORY LOVE

Combined with MUNSEY

February 1 1940

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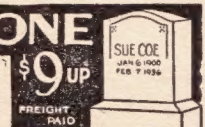

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Love in Reverse

By VINA LAWRENCE

He loved her for her mother's sake, not for her own

"MARVEL, I'm offering you marriage," Tommy Barrett said. "Not threatening your virtue. You know what I can do for you and for your mother. I'll make her the biggest star Broadway has ever seen!"

His hot arms closed about the girl's body, but she slipped away from him, pressing against the terrace parapet for support.

Small and curved in a frothy ruffled net of pale blue, Marvel was not yet grown up. In spite of the heavily shadowed lids above her violet eyes, in spite of the ripe purple mouth, in spite of the sophisticated manner in which her thick brown curls were piled on top of her head, she looked the baby that she was. A frightened baby.

She pressed against the parapet, pushing Tommy away while she regained her breath. He had proposed marriage. Manhattan's most elusive bachelor, middle-aged, gay, handsome in a dissipated way, wanted to marry her. Tommy, the third richest man in America!

It seemed unreal, as unreal as the canyons of neon signs and gay spires and giant skyscrapers that sparkled against the blue velvet of the New York night. As unreal as Tommy's penthouse apartment with its garish modernistic furniture and its mad party of light-headed sophisticates. As unreal as this terrace with its grass and dwarf trees and real flowers twenty stories above Broadway.

As unreal as the whole mad world in which her mother lived. A world of Broadway shows and musical comedies, a glittering world in which nothing was real at all.

"Marriage," Tommy was saying, his breath coming unevenly, "is something I've never offered to another girl. But I want you. You are so sweet, so untouched, so untaught. I knew I wanted you the first time I saw you."

Frightened, she whirled and rushed away, across the long terrace, through the laughing groups of people, back into the big living room where swing music was blaring loudly. The tinkle and rattle of cocktail shakers sounded from the scarlet bar; the air was full of laughter and wisecracks.

She was looking for her mother. She wanted to get away from all this. She wanted to go home.

She burst from the living room into the music room, and stopped short in the doorway. For there was her mother, lovely, voluptuous Dawn Southern. Dawn who had Marvel's violet eyes and whose hair was brilliantly red, whose beautiful white face and curved body were as young and alluring as her daughter's own.

She lay across a sofa, sobbing. And beside her stood a slender young man

"I'd have you sitting on a wide veranda, and I'd hang a full moon in the sky, and pick a star or two for your hair"

with soft dark eyes, and sandy, boyish curls. Marvel knew he was Noel Cranston, who had played opposite her mother in several musical comedies.

They didn't hear the girl at the door and she stood there listening, horrified at what she heard.

"I'm through, I tell you," Dawn cried. "I'm nearly forty and they won't give me a decent part again. Also, I'm broke. Noel, I positively owe my butcher. Marvel and I will starve if Tommy doesn't do something for us."

"You are as lovely as you ever were!" Noel cried. "Dawn, I know you'll have other parts. You and I will knock them cold again."

"Silly boy." Dawn sighed. "You're only twenty-six. *You* will knock them cold again and again, but I— I'm through. It's a horrible, chilly, left-out feeling to know that, Noel. Oh, if I could just get in one more successful play! I'd save my money this time. But it's no use, the producers don't want me. My last two comedies were flops and they say it was my fault. Even Tommy is afraid to take another chance on me."

"Mother!" Marvel said in a strangled voice from the doorway.

DAWN was on her feet in a moment, brushing the tears away, laughing her throaty laugh, smoothing down the black velvet sleekness of her hips. She turned a brave, gay, laughing mask to her daughter now, but it was too late for Marvel had heard the truth at last.

"Darling, here is Noel, your matinee idol," the actress said.

"Yes. I mean, How do you do?" Marvel forgot that she was supposed to be grown up and dropped a curtsy.

Noel Cranston! How she longed to know him! At school, she had cut out his pictures and kept a notebook filled with clippings about him. She had burned a candle before the autographed picture he sent her.

And here he was, in the flesh. Here he was standing before her, looking down at her with his tender brown eyes.

He took her trembling hands in his and held them tight.

"Hello, Kitten," he said soberly. "You're going to be as beautiful as your mother. You look like—well, like a very new edition of the new moon."

Marvel swallowed hard at the lump of excitement and bitter-sweetness in her throat. This was Noel, who had been her secret love for three years. Noel, real as life, thrilling as any of his pictures. And he called her Kitten! *Kitten!*

She looked deep into the brown, clean-cut face, at the dimple that played about his mouth, at the laugh crinkles around his dark eyes. He was slim and well made, very elegant in evening clothes.

"Hello," she said through stiff lips.

It was hard to be polite and casual in the face of such disappointment. She had dreamed so often of this meeting, of how he would look into her face, and both of them would know that they had found love. What a joke on her!

She turned away from him quickly, burying her feelings beneath her anxiety for her mother. Dawn stood with that gay, set smile on her lovely face, with that overbright, gallant gayety in her beautiful eyes.

Poor Dawn! Gay and smiling outside, and forty and broke and through inside.

"Did you dance with Tommy?" she asked in a brave attempt to be casual.

Poor Dawn! If Tommy didn't help, she had no other "angel" to turn to.

And Tommy wouldn't help if Marvel didn't marry him. He would be furious at her for refusing what any other girl in the world would jump at—the chance to be Mrs. Tommy Barrett.

Marvel realized just what she would be doing if she turned him down. White-faced, her breath coming rapidly, she looked at Noel. Noel, whom she had loved so long. And he thought she was only a little girl.

Well, why not marry Tommy? That would solve everything. He would make Dawn successful and happy again. He would give Marvel all the thrilling excitement of wealth and travel and clothes and beauty.

Real love? What did real love have to do with this life, anyway? Real love was back in school burning a candle before the picture of a dream man. It was best to forget real love and dreams. It was best to live the life she had to live.

"Did you dance with Tommy?" Dawn was repeating, her voice almost pleading.

"Yes, Mummie," the girl said softly. "I have been dancing with him. I'm going back to him now."

She turned and left the room abruptly. She didn't even look at Noel again. She had buried him and her heart together beneath Dawn's need of her.

MARVEL walked back through the crowded room to the terrace, her small rounded chin up, her eyes straight ahead. She had been a frightened child a moment before. Now the child was gone. A thoughtful young woman had taken her place, a young woman ready to face life, and duty, and sacrifice.

She paused in the doorway, looking across the terrace, the pale blue net clinging to her young curves, swirling in cloudy ruffles to her high-heeled sandals. Tommy was leaning on the parapet, smoking a cigarette.

Walking slowly, she moved across the terrace to join him. He greeted her with a gay cry.

"I thought you'd come back," he said.

She stood before him, her hands knotted tight together. She stood very straight, like a child who has learned a speech and is going to recite it.

"I came back to tell you that I'd be glad to marry you," she said distinctly.

For a moment the man stared at her. Her naive, blunt speech had taken him aback. Then he laughed with triumph.

"You funny kid," he said, and caught her and drew her to him, his arm about her waist. "You funny, funny kid. Here, unbend a little. Give, darling, give."

He was laughing as he drew her close to his hot body. She didn't struggle, but her lips were set together. She must learn to endure his embrace, his kiss, she reminded herself as she lifted her face bravely.

But her hands, rigid and cold, were thrust against his chest to hold him back.

"Wait," she said, "before you kiss me. I want you to promise me that you'll put on mother's show. Promise me! And if that flops, you'll put on another. You have the money and I'm going to marry you on condition you make her a star again!"

He laughed. "Darling, you make me feel like the old-time villain who marries the farmer's daughter by threatening to foreclose the mortgage on the old homestead. But here goes, I promise. Marry me, Beautiful, and I'll back Dawn's musical comedies until she's in a wheel chair. Is it a deal?"

Marvel said stiffly. "It's a deal."

She closed her eyes and lifted her lips again to the dread of his kiss. But she was jerked from his embrace by a violent hand.

She stumbled back against the parapet, startled by the sight of Noel, an angry Noel who was holding Tommy by his collar, shaking him as a dog would shake a bone.

"A villain! I should hope you'd feel like a villain! You old rake! Trying to buy this kid with her mother's happiness! I ought to throw you off this roof!"

Marvel backed away, thrilled, terrified. Noel, the gay, the debonair, brawling like this about her! But in a moment Tommy had regained his balance. His fist shot out, a well-trained fist, and caught the actor on the chin.

Noel stumbled back, knocking over a chair, was upright again in a bound. He tackled Tommy with all his furious young strength and the two men fell on the terrace, grappling, struggling, rolling. Then Tommy was up again, protecting himself from the other's blows, but Noel came through with a left that sent him flat.

For a moment he lay still, and somehow Marvel found herself in Noel's arms, clinging to him, sobbing.

"Poor baby," he said. "Silly baby! I came out here to tell you not to worry. Now, you really won't have to. We have Tommy Barrett just where we want him."

His warm arms held her close, and he kissed her cheek with tender lips. She clung to him, eyes closed, feeling all at peace and comforted. The arms she had longed for were about her. Her heart was filled with a great flame of thankfulness and joy. She had come home.

Tomorrow didn't matter. For this long moment she was suspended in a golden circle of pure bliss; she was where she belonged at last.

She opened her lips, trying to breathe some of the wonder of her feelings, but no words would come.

She could only cling to Noel, drinking in the perfection of this moment.

THERE was a sound behind them, and they both looked around. Tommy was getting painfully to his feet. "Where do we go from here?" he asked.

"I want you to back Dawn's new show," Noel told him. "Leo Jarvis is willing to produce it. It'll have a good chance. And I want you to let this child alone from now on. Get it?"

Tommy gave him a grim look.

"Or else you advertise my cradle-snatching tendencies to the tabloids?"

"Yes!"

"Okay," Tommy said. "You win. You're a smart young man, Noel Cranston. Too smart, maybe."

Noel's dark eyes narrowed.

"I've worked with Dawn for five years," he said. "I don't intend to see a rat like you hurt either her or her daughter. You've backed her before and it's only your stubborn selfishness that keeps you from wanting to back her now."

"My stubborn selfishness and the two hundred grand I lost on her last year!" Tommy cried. "Dawn's through. She's washed up. I've seen them come and go on Broadway for twenty years. But I'll back this show. You can tell her that, but please don't mention this little incident."

Noel laughed. "I won't," he promised. "I wouldn't want to worry her and hurt her feelings. We'll let her think that you're the same angel she has always thought you. Just a big noble man who is interested in Art!"

He took Marvel's arm and led her back across the terrace into the crowded, noisy room.

They stood in the doorway a moment, hand in hand.

"Noel! Marvel!" It was Dawn's voice from across the room.

She was sitting on a silver stool at the scarlet bar. Her great eyes were black with anxiety and wild hope. She was holding a champagne cocktail in one hand, and her other arm was around the shoulders of one of the young men who crowded about her.

"I want my share of love—" The music broke and wailed through the room as half a dozen people took up the refrain.

"Let's go tell her, poor darling," Noel said, and he led Marvel through the dancing, laughing couples who filled the room.

"Dawn, I've been talking to Tommy," he began as he reached her. "He says he has reconsidered and will back your show."

The actress went pale under her make-up; relief flared like a light in

Little girls should be told the facts of life. They won't live long if they burn the candle at both ends

her eyes. But the moment passed swiftly and she regained control of herself.

"Wonderful!" she cried. She stood up and climbed quickly on top of the bar, drawing Noel up beside her. "Ladies and gentlemen, an announcement!" she cried. "A new show, 'Moon Over Broadway,' will go into rehearsal next week, starring Noel Cranston and yours truly! Tommy, the sweet angel, is the sweet angel!"

There was a lot of mad applause and laughter. Everyone rushed toward the bar for a drink to celebrate. Dawn turned to Noel and kissed him before everyone, a long gay kiss. Marvel melted into the crowd, forgotten.

Dawn was so lovely, a dramatic, scintillating figure in her black velvet with white orchids at her throat. If she wanted Noel, or any man, she could have him. Marvel sighed, wishing that she could look half as alluring and fascinating as her mother.

And then she remembered.

"I do look like her," she thought. "So very much like her. Surely I can have sex appeal, too. Maybe if I can prove to Noel that I'm really grown up, he'll notice me. I'll try to be as sophisticated and gay as Dawn is. I'll *make* him realize that I'm not a baby!"

She drew out her vanity case and rubbed lipstick on her mouth, touched up her eyes. She wished that she had dressed in something more daring than the blue net. Then she turned to the first man she saw and looked at him in her mother's laughing manner, looked at him and put out her hand.

"Dance with me," she commanded in Dawn's light-hearted way.

The man, whose name was Al Herbert, and who was good enough to practice on, took her in his arms; he looked surprised but interested.

"Sure, beautiful," he said. "Where have you been keeping yourself? Huh?"

THAT was the beginning of Marvel's attempt to be as sophisticated and alluring as Dawn. During the next weeks while "Moon Over Broadway" went into rehearsal, she had plenty of chance to practice on the men she met at her mother's parties. For Dawn, back on the crest of prosperity again, was enormously popular, and there was nothing she liked better than a party.

Marvel begged for more beautiful and sophisticated clothes, and was soon almost as popular as Dawn herself. Surrounded by a bevy of admirers, repeating in a high, tense voice the banter and wisecracks of the day, the girl always kept one eye on Noel. Did he realize that she was growing up? Was he noticing her?

Leo Jarvis, the producer of the show, noticed her all right enough. A gay young man about town with two divorces and a string of unsavory attachments, he was rather handsome in a dark way, although his lips were too red, his hazel eyes too prominent. Marvel felt wicked when with him and therefore encouraged his attentions.

Soon he became *the* beau. He gave her the rush of her life. Dinners, shows, late breakfasts, drives, dancing, nightclubs followed each other in rapid succession. He sent her orchids and books, silly little gifts, long love poems.

Her days were soon so full that she was breathless. She always went to rehearsals, partly because Dawn liked to have her, partly because she wanted to see Noel. She spent the morning hours going over the star's part and helping with the songs, until she knew the play as well as Dawn knew it.

The afternoons meant rehearsals. The late afternoons and evenings

meant dates and parties with the crowd, or alone with Leo. There was little time for anything, but Marvel spent twenty-four hours a day doing only one real thing—dreaming of Noel. Every morning meant a new day when he might speak to her. Every rehearsal meant watching him, hoping, praying, dreaming.

Noel did notice her, of course, in his casual way. In fact he seemed to be a little alarmed about her going out with Leo.

He gave her a serious lecture one day at rehearsal when he joined her down in the vast empty theater.

"See here," he cried, looking at her keenly, taking in the delicate blond beauty of her face and hair, the very smart cut of her tailored suit and the hard finish of her make-up. "You're sort of stepping things up, aren't you, Kitten? Hasn't your mother told you any of the facts of life?"

Marvel felt her heart beating hard and painfully in her throat. She could not look at Noel's brown young face, his handsome eyes, without that strange inner excitement, like the breathless stillness that comes before a tropical storm.

"Suppose that you tell me," she said. "*You* tell me the facts of life, Noel!"

"The truth is hard and very unfair," he answered, "but the facts are that little girls like you shouldn't be burning the candles at both ends. Especially when the candles are lit by a man like Leo."

Was he jealous? Did she dare to hope that he was jealous?

"And what do you plan to do about it?" she asked.

"Well," he said, "I'd like to wash that make-up off your face, give you a good spanking and send you back to school. I've told Dawn that you have no business mixing with this Broadway crowd. Now I'm telling *you*."

"Maybe I like it."

"Maybe you'll wish you had listened to me!"

"Maybe you'd better keep an eye on me!" Her violet eyes were bright with invitation.

He took her by the shoulder with one hand, drew out his handkerchief and wiped some of the blue shadow from her lids, some of the purple goo from her lips. Then he shook her gently.

"I do intend to keep an eye on you! Somebody ought to, you foolish baby!"

From then on Noel was her self-appointed bodyguard; she had to be content with that. For weeks, as "Moon Over Broadway" went on rehearsing, Marvel and Dawn continued to make the rounds of the night spots, and wherever Marvel went, Noel was sure to turn up, his dark eyes watchful, his young mouth a bit grim.

If he saw her take more than one cocktail, he was always there beside her, warning her of the danger.

"Watch out, kitten. One is your limit, remember. Hadn't we better barge along home?"

If he saw her flirting with a new man, he was there to find out all about the man and to warn her against him. No man, in Noel's opinion, was good enough for Marvel.

LEO was becoming more insistent all the time. He wasn't content with the laughter she gave him instead of the kisses he demanded. And Noel, as if he had been waiting for the signs, grew more watchful than ever. He insisted upon accompanying the pair on their dates, much to Leo's disgust.

Then it happened. On a moonlit August evening Marvel had gone to a nightclub with both men escorting her.

Noel was apparently unconscious of Leo's scowling sulkiness. Naturally, he wanted Marvel to himself.

While they were watching the floor show from their table, Noel was called to the phone, and the moment he was gone, Leo stood up and drew Marvel to her feet.

"Let's ditch the bulldog," he said. "Frankly, I've had enough of him. Aren't you old enough to be trusted out alone?"

Hesitatingly, Marvel agreed to go with him. Perhaps, she thought, it would make Noel realize he was jealous; maybe it would make him wake up!

Hurriedly, she and Leo slipped from the nightclub to his waiting car and whirled away into the moonlight night. They drove through the park and stopped before the towering apartment hotel where he lived.

"You've never seen my place," he said. "It is cute and cozy. Come up for a drink."

Marvel hesitated again, but she finally consented, although she felt a little frightened when Leo let her into his quiet terrace apartment high above the city.

It was very quiet in his small living room and they were so very alone! He put his arm about her.

"Happy?" he asked.

She found herself trembling. She heard his breathing become harsh as he pressed her close, and suddenly he caught her to him with both arms. Before she could move, his full red mouth clamped over hers, demanding her lips, taking them.

She struggled, badly frightened at the heat of his passion, but he held her closer, kissing her until she was weak with struggling, sickened with disgust.

"Let me go," she whispered brokenly. *"Please!"*

"You've been leading me on for weeks," he told her. "I don't take this kind of treatment from any girl. I want you. I'll teach you how to love. You'll be glad afterward—"

"Let me go," she sobbed. "Oh, let me go!"

He only held her closer, bending her small curved body to his, forcing her lips to yield to him. And then a voice sounded from the doorway. Noel's voice.

"Okay," it said. "Cut. This is the end of the scene. Come along, Marvel. I'm taking you home."

She ran to him, sobbing, and threw herself into his arms. She heard Leo's mumbled excuses with deaf ears. She didn't care what he said. She never wanted to see him again as long as she lived. She clung to Noel and he led her down the elevator to the ground floor, out to his roadster.

He said not a word as he drove her home. At her door, he told her curtly, "I'm coming in and wait for your mother. Something has to be done about you."

Marvel was sick with shame. She followed him meekly as he strode into the luxurious living room. Dawn was already there, curled up on a divan, frothy green chiffon negligee trailing, as she studied her part.

"Hello, baby," she cried. "Come and help me with this stupid second act. I came home early so that we could go over it tonight." Then she noticed the girl's white, strained face, Noel's set jaw.

She stood up. "Is anything the matter?" she asked. "You look like a funeral all ready to happen."

"There'll be plenty of funeral around here," Noel said savagely, "if you don't

do something about this kid. Dawn, I came in here to talk to you about her. I've mentioned it a couple of times before."

"I know," Dawn said sweetly. "You think I should send her to a convent or put her in a straitjacket. Noel; darling, you can't seem to realize that Marvel is a grown young lady and has a right to learn the ropes the same as you and I. I suppose you caught her kissing a boy tonight, did you?"

"I found her up in Leo's apartment alone with him," Noel snapped. "He was acting a cad and the poor kid was scared to death. They ditched me at a nightclub, but I felt sure he'd take her up to his place. I know his technique."

Dawn fell back on the divan and began to laugh, gay, hearty laughter that brought tears to her eyes.

"Noel, you poor dear! Honestly, any girl of sixteen can manage Leo. You are being absurd!"

Marvel backed away, saying nothing. But the young man turned pale with anger.

"Dawn, you don't know what you're doing!" he cried. "You are tossing her to a bunch of lions and laughing about it! You'll make a hard, sophisticated little Broadway chiseler out of her. And I won't stand for it! Do you realize that she nearly married Tommy to save your career? If I hadn't stopped it—"

"So that's what happened!" Dawn cried. "I wondered why Tommy was suddenly through with Marvel. Did he actually ask you to marry him, baby?"

"Yes, he did," Marvel admitted. She felt very tired and a little sick of the whole thing.

"And you refused to marry him!" her mother cried. "Do you realize he has ten million in cash?"

Noel went over to Dawn and caught her by the shoulders.

"Why, you hard-boiled, hard-hearted—" he began savagely. "I've known the beautiful face of you for years. But I never knew before what's inside of you. Any mother who could want her child married to Tommy Barrett!"

Dawn flung away from him with an angry gesture.

"Why shouldn't I want her married to him?" she demanded. "She'll never get anywhere following my footsteps! I want her to get a little security and comfort out of life. Why shouldn't she learn how to take care of herself, too? She has to learn how to take a drink and handle a guy like Leo sooner or later. I don't want to keep her wrapped in cellophane until she's an old maid!"

For a moment the two stood and stared at each other; then Noel said slowly:

"Broadway has got you. You've got a neon light for a heart and a dollar sign for a brain. You're pretty far gone." He turned back to Marvel and took her hand, "Come on out of here with me, kitten. I want to talk to you."

Before Dawn could stop him, he led the girl out of the apartment. His arm was about her tight, all the way down in the elevator and through the lobby. When they reached his car, he took her chin in his hand.

"How about marrying me tonight?" he said.

SHE stared at him, her violet eyes incredulous, her red mouth trembling. Marry Noel? *Marry* him? She must be dreaming!

"Marry—you—" she repeated weakly.

He helped her into the roadster and they shot out into the midnight streets, brakes screeching.

"That's the only way I can get you away from Dawn," he said. "And she and her crowd will ruin your life. Believe me, I know. I've seen little innocent kids like you hit Broadway before. It takes about six months for all the bright sweetness to wear off, for everything to be tinsel and tarnish. Six months from now you'll be gone, Marvel, and a hard brazen wise little kid will be in your place."

"And you'd care?" she whispered.

"I can't stand it. I guess I'm just an old softie, but—well, if you'll marry me, I'll have a right to take you out of all this. You needn't be afraid. It would be only as if I had adopted you, of course."

"Marriage," she repeated, scarcely hearing him. Her eyes were like stars. Marriage to Noel! Marriage and heaven and dreams come true!

"That's the only way I see out of this," he said. "I can't sleep for worrying about you. You've been on my mind ever since that first night I met you. I feel responsible for you, more so now that I realize just how lightly your mother feels her responsibility."

"Of course I'll marry you," Marvel said, her heart leaping, a high white flame of happiness within her. The wings of her heart folded about that flame, folded in peace and quiet. She had found heaven.

It was beginning to rain and Noel muttered a few bad words about it as he tucked her into his car. They had a long drive before them; it seemed as if Old Man Weather might have held off.

But Marvel was too happy to worry about the rain. Her spirits rose to playfulness again, and she snuggled against him, smiling up at his gloomy profile.

"Don't be so cross," she whispered. "Let's pretend that everything is just as you ordered it. Let's pretend I'm glamorous and famous, and that you're marrying me because you're crazy about me"—daringly she said the words—"and not because you've been railroaded into it."

He relaxed a little, and smiled down at her. The smile sounded in his voice as he said, "Delicious baby. It's so long since I've played that game, I don't know how."

"What would you do? What would you say?" she persisted.

He cleared his throat, squared his shoulders. "Well, to begin with, I'd have the setting of the scene a broad veranda in the early evening. And I'd hang a full moon in the sky, and pick a star or two for your hair—"

"Oh, go on, go on," she breathed.

And he quite entered into the spirit of the thing; they "pretended" all the way to the distant little country town where they could buy a license.

They had to rouse a sleepy clerk at three o'clock in the morning. They had to lie about Marvel's age, putting it at eighteen. But no one questioned them. So they were married.

Marvel turned to Noel. She looked like a happy child in the crumpled silver lamé dinner gown, wilted orchids drooping from her shoulder, hair wild about her little face. She closed her eyes and lifted her lips to his kiss.

And he, who had seemed to go back into his shell during the ceremony, hesitated before he took her in his arms and kissed her.

She was married to him now. She dared to give him all her love, all her heart and dreams at last. She clung to him with arms and lips, offering him a future, a lifetime, of devotion.

But his mouth was cool and stiff against hers, and he thrust her away at once.

In the roadster again, he told her, his head turned away, "Sorry I had to kiss you, but it might have looked funny otherwise."

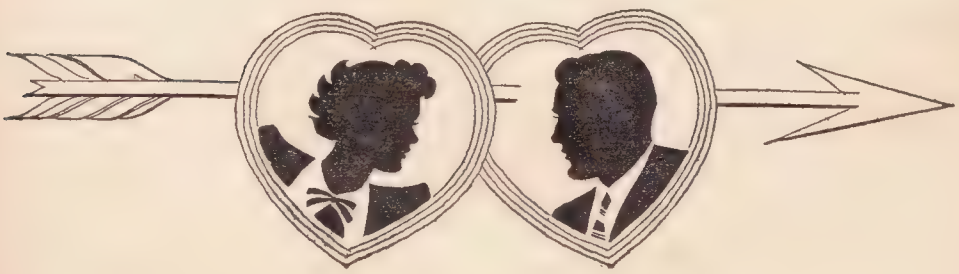
Sorry I had to kiss you! *Sorry!*

Baffled, crushed, she shrank back into her own corner of the cushioned seat.

He didn't love her: he only pitied her. She should have known.

She held her breath so that he wouldn't hear her sob.

TO BE CONCLUDED



Tonight

"I expected you'd turn up—like a bad penny," Stan sneered. "But I didn't think you'd have the bad taste to force yourself on Bliss"

BLISS COLBY stood on the small iron balcony, gazing down over the quiet little town beyond her hilltop home. The pleasant chiming of church bells; people sauntering along tree-shaded streets; cars moving leisurely in the summer twilight.

A typical small town on Sunday evening.

She moved restlessly, and the snaking neon sign behind her, announcing "The Georgian Tea Room," made a shimmering halo of her pale-gold head.

She wished Stan would come. Yet she knew he would be unpleasant when he did. Because he had gone to the races at Heatherdown today, when he had promised her never again, and had lost the three hundred dollars' commission he had made last week. He had not told her, but bad news travels fast in a small town.

"How well I should know," she mused whimsically.

Her dark eyes narrowed speculatively as a cream-colored coupé swung into her driveway, stopped directly beneath her. A man got out, and before her eyes recognized him, her lurching heart told her who he was.

Crazily, a thought flashed through her mind. "There comes a time in a

You're Mine!

By FRANCES LAKE

She sold herself—and he made her pay

"We boys from across the tracks don't force ourselves on people," Stan returned cheerfully. "We win our way"

woman's life when the man she might have married should never return."

"Dick Bishop!" she cried in amazement, color stinging her cheeks. "It can't possibly be you!"

He looked up. He was dressed in a checked sports jacket with oxford gray flannels. His black hair, in the glow from the neon sign, glistened like satin.

"Hello, Bliss," he said quietly, his dark eyes holding hers.

As their glances locked, each knew the other was remembering, painfully, their parting five years ago. A girl of seventeen and a serious young man of twenty-one, desperately in love, they had faced the girl's unyielding parents.

But it was no use. For he was from the wrong side of town and she was the banker's daughter.

She had known him always, first as newsboy and then as grocery clerk, supporting his widowed mother, the way one knows everybody in a small town. But she had not been aware of him until she began attending dances at the Country Club, where he played the piano in the club orchestra.

It had begun by her asking him to play her favorite songs. Then a stolen dance or two, strolls in the club gardens, until one night, canoeing on the river, they had kissed and found the wonder and the glory of true love. Lost in their discovery, they had not returned till dawn.

It had ended when he brought her home. "I'll work my way through college!" he told her parents. "I'll do anything, if you'll give Bliss to me when I make good."

But they had only laughed at him until finally the girl herself was convinced that marriage was impossible. They'd shipped her off on a two-year tour of Europe while the town forgot, and had never heard from him since.

But she knew he had worked his way through the State Conservatory of Music and now was pianist-conductor of one of the top-ranking orchestras of the country. She never missed his weekly broadcast.

"Surprised?" he asked, smiling.

"Speechless, Dick. What on earth brings you back?"

He said, in sudden gravity, "I've bought Cy Collins' estate at the edge of town. I thought it would be such a swell place to come back to, between engagements."

"Oh! You must be terribly rich as well as famous."

"Aren't you going to ask me in, Bliss?"

"Of course! I was just so dumfounded I forgot my manners."

He made no comment on the changes in the spacious old hall. But she told him herself, with a proud lift of her head.

"I'm quite the successful businesswoman now, you know." She gestured toward what had been her long drawing-room; it was remodeled now into smaller rooms for bridge luncheons and private dinner parties. The library and family dining rooms opposite had been made into one large hall for banquets.

"All this is for the public," she said. "I live upstairs."

As they went up the wide, winding stairway, she explained, "Father's bank failed, and he died soon after. Mother followed him last year. There was nothing left but this big old pile of stone. So I—"

Dick stopped her, his hand on her arm.

"You don't have to tell me," he said. "There hasn't anything happened to you during the past five years that I haven't known."

A little nervously, she preceded him

into the room, a quiet, gracious place with mellow mahogany, drawn velvet drapes, dim family portraits. She was glad he had—kept track. He knew, then, that she was engaged to Stan Todd.

But as they sat chatting there together, the look in his intense black eyes unnerved her. She rose suddenly and gestured toward her old rosewood piano in a shadowy corner.

"Won't you play for me? I've never heard you since you got famous, you know, except on the radio."

"If you'll sit beside me."

She sat beside him and watched, fascinated, as his long slim fingers flew with effortless ease over the yellowed old keys. Dreamily she closed her eyes, drowning in the sweet, haunting music he had made so popular.

The conversation almost inevitably veered to that night five years ago.

"But it wasn't love," she said. "I know that now. It was too sudden, too —terrifying to be love."

"The word will do for me," he told her grimly, "until a better one is found."

She laughed, a little nervously. "Flatterer! Remembering an incident like that when girls all over the country fall worshiping at your feet."

"Was it just an incident?" His dark head bent over her and she felt herself drowning in the depths of his black eyes. Suddenly she was in his arms, held hard against the slow, heavy throb of his heart. "Those kisses, Bliss? Were they so casual?"

His mouth was on hers, and she went blind for a moment with the storm of emotion that flamed through her. Oh, this was madness! This melting, sinking ecstasy.

His lips released hers at last, but his arms still held her. "I've had that coming all these years," he exulted against her hair. "The goodby kiss you never gave me, remember?"

He went on in a throbbing voice, "So much has changed since then. But you've never married. So I've kept hoping, earning my place in the sun—a place you wouldn't be ashamed to share."

"Dick," she stopped him, "I'm sorry. I thought you knew. I'm engaged to Stan Todd."

His arms dropped from about her. "That's one item," his voice clipped out, "that I slipped up on. It was never announced?"

She shook her head. "Announcements mean parties, and parties mean money. That's something neither Stan nor I have much of now."

He laughed shortly. "What do you call money, Bliss? Todd's family owned half the town."

"And left him half a million dollars," she agreed. "But it's tied up. He can't touch a dime until he makes good in the real estate business his father left him." She added defensively, "But he'll make good, once he adjusts himself to business."

"How long has he been trying?"

"Two years. But he'd been a playboy so long. It takes time."

"And something else." Dick rose, drew her up to him. He smiled a slow, careful smile. "Thanks," he said, "for making me believe at last, that night five years ago was just an incident with you, after all."

"But how—"

"This," he answered, his finger tracing the warm curve of her mouth. "It kisses with such fire and passion, Bliss. When you're engaged to another man. So it can't mean a thing, can it? It tells me that even if you hadn't been engaged, even though I've made my mark, I'm still the boy from the wrong side of town."

"I never thought of you like that!" she denied hotly. "You're too sensitive, too—"

"Sorry," came Stan's voice from the doorway. "Didn't know I was intruding."

BLISS saw that he had been drinking. His blond hair was disheveled, his blue eyes glazed. He wore soiled white riding breeches, polo shirt, black boots.

"Darling, this is Dick Bishop." Her voice was pleading; he could be so coldly insulting when he was annoyed. "Remember him?"

"One is forced to," said Stan, walking toward them. "You should have notified the town of your arrival, Bishop. We'd have met you with banners waving. I expected you to turn up when I heard you'd bought the Collins place, but I didn't think you'd have the bad taste to force yourself on Bliss."

She gasped, "Stan!"

He ignored her. "You were in love with her once—or whatever passes for love in your circle. The town has forgotten that touching climax to your brief love life—that night spent on the river. But it will remember if it sees that luxury car of yours cluttering up the scenery. Bliss is engaged to me. You will not see her again."

Dick smiled. "Since you bring the matter up, I did love her. I still do, and I always will. And as for forcing myself upon her, we boys from across the tracks don't blunder in—we win our way."

He bowed slightly to Bliss, turned and walked out of the room.

Silently, for a long moment, she stood looking at Stan. Then she went over to the window.

"Go on, say you despise me!" he cried defensively. "Just because I'm jealous of every man who looks at you. Because I love you!"

She said wearily, "I don't despise you; I just don't understand you. You say you want to marry me. Then why don't you settle down and make good so we can marry? Stop squandering the money you earn?"

He laughed shortly. "You call a lousy three hundred dollars money?"

"I do," she said sharply. "And the five hundred you made last month. But where is it now? Gone on gambling, races, every bad bet you could find."

"It was only a drop in the bucket," said Stan petulantly. "You know I need ten thousand to get on my feet. To buy up that subdivision and sell it into lots. I've a dozen prospects lined up. But who in this town has ten thousand to lend?"

She looked at him; laughed suddenly, a little shrilly. "Dick Bishop has. His radio salary alone is ten thousand a week. You could ask him if you'd been more friendly."

Stan's lips curled. "Me—ask that low piano player? I wouldn't give him the satisfaction—"

He broke off as an idea struck him. "Say, Bliss! He'd give it to you in a minute, if you asked him. He's in love with you."

Swept away by the idea, he did not see the outrage whitening her face. He caught her eagerly in his arms. "Darling, please! It's for us, remember. I'd buy up that land, make a turnover of several thousand, and have the business on its feet at last. Then I'd come into my money and we could marry at once."

"You don't know what you're saying!" Bliss cried in horror. "You can't mean this."

But he did. He pleaded with her for an hour. He begged her to see the injustice of the will. His father had not

realized that money would become so tight, or he would not have tied up the inheritance so. Why, Bishop would probably feel honored to be allowed to help a home-town establishment out of the red. He was noted for his generosity, wasn't he? Besides, he'd be repaid in a month or two, as soon as those lots sold.

His urging, insistent words beat against her brain like leaden pellets. Until finally, on the verge of hysteria, she agreed to see Dick.

WHEN she woke the next morning, Bliss lay for a long time, motionless. It was silly to feel so let down. Stan wasn't really as greedy as he sounded. He was all enthused now with the idea of getting on his feet at last. But of course he would never rest until he repaid Dick's loan.

Why, it was the only thing to do! It would be the making of Stan. Strange she had not thought of that before.

She dressed carefully in the smartest frock she owned, a sheer black crêpe with red antelope belt. With fingers that trembled only slightly, she slanted a red bit of felt with a black veil over one eye, and went downstairs.

In the kitchen, she gave instructions to Nora, her cook-housekeeper, for the bridge luncheons she had booked. It was ten o'clock. Perhaps Dick would invite her to lunch with him.

She set off across town, and half an hour later the butler was ushering her into the drawing-room of his new home. A smooth, lovely room, done in an exquisite blending of deep rose and gold and black.

Dick was immaculate in tan flannels, that made him look brown as an Indian. He stood before her, his black eyes showing his surprise, a fine white line etching his attractive mouth.

"Why have you come? If it's because of what Todd said last night, forget it."

She smiled tightly. "It's about Stan, but not because of last night. In spite of it!"

She explained very low. She had rehearsed her speech, so why was it so hard now? People borrowed money, all over the world. Other women through the ages had humbled themselves for their loves.

Dick did not help her. Impossible to tell from his face what he was thinking. From her collar to her hair she went scarlet.

"So you see," she finished, one trembling hand against her throat, "it's only for a little while. Probably Stan can pay it back in a month or two, when he has sold those lots."

"Tell me one thing," said Dick finally. "Was this your idea or his?"

"Stan's—or no!" She corrected nervously. "Both, I guess."

"That's all I wanted to know," he said savagely. "So the boy from the wrong side of the tracks has his uses after all—when he has money."

He looked at her, but she knew he did not see her, his eyes were so blind with fury.

"Yes, my dear," he went on hoarsely. "I'll give you the money—for your lover. That's all you want to hear, isn't it?"

He walked over to his desk, jerked open a drawer, wrote out a check. He returned to her slowly, a strange smile on his lips.

"You may have this, on one condition," he stipulated. "Do you want the money badly enough, my sweet, to give me a week-end honeymoon?"

She started back, shocked speechless, but he only laughed down into her dark, staring eyes.

"Starve a man long enough and he'll

grow desperate, my dearest. I've been starved for you so long. And last night when you kissed me I thought my dreams had come true. But it was just a kiss, wasn't it? Another casual kiss.

"Five years ago you said you loved me, Bliss. You tore out my heart when you denied that love and let your parents part us. Now, if money will buy you for me, even for only a week-end, I'll gladly pay. I can't let you go, Bliss. Not this time!"

She said low, "I've—never gone in for that sort of thing."

Then suddenly she remembered how dear and sweet he had been that night five years ago. He had loved her then; he said he loved her still. Surely he wouldn't force her to do anything against her will.

"I'll go," she said finally, "if you won't tell anyone."

His ringing laugh was like a blow across her face. He took her roughly in his arms; his slender fingers cupped her chin, forcing her head back against his shoulder.

"I can read you like a book," he said hoarsely. "You think I'll go all chivalrous on you when the showdown comes. But that's where you're wrong. I'm a man, Bliss. And the way I feel about you is dynamite!"

His fingers, hard and hurting, moved her chin back and forth. "You love him that much? You'd sell yourself to me for a week-end—to help him?"

He crushed his mouth against hers and held it there in slow, still fury. Her pride fought against the humiliation, the outrage of that kiss, but her senses reeled with the ecstasy of it.

"Do you still go with me, Bliss?" he whispered against her bruised, quivering mouth.

"Yes," she gasped. She could not have said no if her life depended upon it.

SHE was lying on the sofa in her sun room when Stan came, right after lunch. "I was out when you called," he began eagerly, his eyes questioning her.

Without a word, she handed him Dick's check.

"Darling, I knew you'd swing it!" He bent over her, swept her up into his arms, his mouth seeking hers.

With small, tensed hands, Bliss held him off. "Please. I—don't feel like kissing right now." Then to her horror, she began to cry.

Stan let her go abruptly, stood up. "Okay, if that's the way it is." His voice pleaded: "You don't seem to realize that this is for both of us. If things go the way I expect, we can be married in two months."

"It's all right." She dabbed at her eyes. But it wasn't. Another man kissing her so that she couldn't endure her fiancé's love-making.

Stan spoke carefully. "I admit the whole thing must have been distasteful. He didn't get fresh? You kept it entirely on a business basis?"

She laughed a little. "Oh, strictly business." Then she looked up at him. "But what if he had demanded some sort of payment?"

Stan said easily, "You'd have put him in his place. Made him so ashamed he'd have groveled at your feet."

Bliss reddened painfully. "Somehow," she said drily, "I can't picture Dick Bishop groveling to anybody."

Stan was quite confident. "You've earned us a big celebration, sweet. How about running up to Cleveland Saturday and taking in a show, maybe a night club?"

"On Dick Bishop's money?" she retorted. "You'll use every penny of that check in your business, Stan Todd. Besides—" She stopped.

"I didn't tell you," she added breath-

lessly. "I had a letter from Martha Hoffman this morning, from Virginia. She's been begging me to visit her, you know, and I've practically decided to leave tonight."

"For all week?" Stan exclaimed. "But how can you?"

"Why not? Nora's reliable. She's been housekeeper-cook here all my life," she reminded him. "Besides, I've nothing important on the books."

So that was how she avoided Stan's kisses until she left Friday night on her rendezvous with Dick Bishop. She did not go to Virginia. She never left town. She never, in fact, left her house.

"You might try knocking!" Bliss scolded, sitting up rigidly
"I never saw you first thing in the morning," he answered, unashamed. "I thought maybe it would disillusion me"

But no one knew but Nora, who swore eternal secrecy. "My, these love spats you and Mister Stan do have!" she mourned, shaking her gray head. "And now you want him to think you've run away for a whole week. If you spat now, what will you do when you're married?"

THE week passed. Bliss heard nothing from Dick, and the tension kept tightening within her until she thought she must break. Was he so sure of her? Or perhaps he was bored with his bargain. That would be the crowning humiliation—Dick winning her consent to go with him, only to fling it back in her face.

She endured the suspense until Friday morning, and then she called him on the phone.

"I've been wondering," she faltered, her thoughts scattering at the sound of his voice, "what clothes to take with me. I've no idea where we're going—if we're going."

"Take nothing," he told her, "except what you wear. We've a two-hundred-mile drive before us."

Her breath caught. "But—"

"The clothes you'll need later," he said, "I will furnish."

Color flamed in her cheeks. "I'm not that poor!" she blazed at him. "I've decent enough clothes. You won't be ashamed of me."

He answered coolly, "When a woman goes on the gold standard with me, she goes all the way."

There was an electric pause. Bliss cried raggedly, "I never thought you could be so vindictive, Dick Bishop."

"Sorry," he said, "that I can't prolong this delightful conversation. Fact is, I'm quite busy. Miss Mayo, my singer—charming girl—has been visiting me, discussing our future bookings."

"Don't let me keep you."

"Only a moment," he assured her. "You remember the arrangements? Leave town on the five o'clock bus tonight, get off at Valleydale, the first stop. I'll pick you up there."

Bliss slammed up the receiver, sat glaring at it furiously. So that's why he hadn't called her all week; he was entertaining the singer, Maxine Mayo. She remembered her pictures. Stunning, darkly exotic, Spanish. Dick had discovered her last year in Rio.

Well, she was glad she knew. She could really hate him now. So he still loved her, did he? But that didn't prevent him from having an affair with his gorgeous singer.

She tightened her lips. Probably he thought, because she lived in a small town, that she didn't know her way around. What did he think she was—little Red Ridinghood?

At a quarter past five that evening, Bliss got off the bus at Valleydale. It was just an intersection of country crossroads. Far down one tree-shaded lane, she saw Dick's long low cream-colored car. It moved toward her slowly, as the bus ambled out of sight.

Heart pounding high in her throat, she stood brushing imaginary specks from her smart white sharkskin suit, until he swung open the door beside her.

"Hello," he said, softly, and his faint smile was ironic. He wore a dark blue suit, and he was the most maddeningly attractive man she had ever seen. Although the day was warm, he wore gray silk gloves—to protect his million-dollar hands, she supposed.

"Oh, hello," she said brightly. "Fancy meeting you here." She set her overnight bag in the space behind the red-leather seats, and slid in beside him. The car rolled silently onward.

"Charming day," he observed after

a while. "I ordered it specially. I likewise demand charm in my—er—lady of the moment. So if you'll forget your resentment toward me during our brief —what was it I called it?"

"Week-end honeymoon," she supplied, then could have cut out her tongue.

"Ah, yes," he sighed.

He drove leisurely, chatting off and on. But Bliss scarcely heard him. She felt giddy and lightheaded, sitting so close to the lean length of him. She kept her eyes glued to the road unwinding before her, and tried to compose her whirling thoughts.

Around eight o'clock, in the softly gathering twilight, Dick swung off the highway into the yard of a quaint rustic tavern set against a thickly wooded hillside.

"Our—destination?" asked Bliss, as he helped her out.

"By no means, my sweet." He looked down at her, mocking devils dancing in his eyes. "This is only halfway. But it's a charming spot for dinner, I've discovered."

They were expected, for the innkeeper came up bowing and smiling, addressing Dick by name. He ushered them immediately through the dining room onto the wide, screened veranda. In an intimate shadowy corner, a table was set with lighted candles and a bridelike centerpiece of white roses.

The food, Bliss supposed, was marvelous. But to her it was so much sawdust. Soft, plaintive Hawaiian music floated from the dining room, lulling the senses; the moon overhead shone like a million-dollar gold piece. And Dick Bishop sat across the table, candlelight reflected in his dark eyes, bent so adoringly upon her it was hard to remember he was only mocking her.

His voice was a lover's voice, low throbbing, ardent. He called her "My Sweet" and "Dearest" and "Loveliest." He said, "You don't mind? It helps to build up the illusion that we're on our honeymoon. You might try it, too."

She thought hectically, "It was better in the car, when he treated me impersonally as a hitchhiker." But time was passing, and now he was building her up, she supposed. She tried to laugh at him, and hated herself for wanting to cry instead.

"Dance?" he suggested over demitasse.

"It's your show," she reminded him. "I'm just the paid performer."

He took her in his arms and they danced there on the veranda, alone. Smooth moon. Smooth Hawaiian music. Smooth man. She had not danced with him for five years, but it was as if they had never been apart.

It seemed to Bliss that her senses were more keenly alive than ever before. The strong circle of his arm about her waist, his hand clasping hers, the faint, clean fragrance from his hair—all these were stamped upon her mind. Suddenly a wave of dizziness overpowered her.

With a helpless sob, she buried her face against his lapel. "I can't!" she gasped. "I simply can't."

Instantly he stopped dancing, the muscles of his arm tense and trembling as he crushed her against him. Then abruptly he let her go.

BACK in the car again, she removed her hat and leaned wearily back against the cool leather seat. The muted hum of the motor, the singing of heavy tires on asphalt were the only sounds that broke the silence as the car plunged on through the night.

With staring eyes, Bliss followed the moon riding overhead. She tried to think, but it was impossible, caught as she was in the grip of an unnamable

emotion more powerful than any she had ever known.

Hours—or was it centuries later?—the car swung into a deep grove of cedars and stopped before a low white vine-covered house, Spanish-style.

"Asleep?" asked Dick softly.

"No," Bliss answered, and sat up. Involuntarily she gasped at the beauty of the scene before her. Towering trees formed a natural amphitheater for the house, and the beautifully terraced lawn led down to a small lake, gleaming like molten silver in the moonlight.

"How—lovely!" she murmured.

"Like it? I bought it from a broker friend whose business went on the rocks."

He drew her into his arms, tipped her face up and kissed her lingeringly. "Your face is so flushed, my sweet, yet your hands are cold. Don't be frightened. I won't exact full payment tonight. Only this."

He pressed his mouth against hers, deeply, ardently. He held her so and kissed her until her hands crept up over his broad shoulders and clung there helplessly. She closed her eyes, with the feeling that the waters in that lake below were engulfing her.

And then he let her go. He led her into the house, across a charming circular hall, softly lighted, marble-floored, with tall vaulted ceiling and railed balcony. He led her up the wide padded stairway, pushed open a door, snapped on a light.

It was the most charming bedroom Bliss had ever seen, all pale blue brocade and silver. Fragile, silvery-looking furniture upholstered in blue. Blue draperies sweeping the polished floor at the wide curving windows. On the canopied bed lay a diaphanous nightgown of blue chiffon.

Standing behind her, Dick pressed her lightly against him. "I'd be a fool," he whispered in her ear, "to take tonight what tomorrow may be a gracious gift."

"You seem so sure." Bliss closed her eyes, swaying a little. When she opened them again he was going out the door, closing it softly behind him.

She awoke the next morning to the feather-light touch of lips brushing her eyelids. Her eyes flew wide, and there was Dick smiling down at her.

"You might try knocking!" She sat up rigidly, pulling the covers about her shoulders.

"I never saw you first thing in the morning," he answered, unashamed. "I wanted to. Thought maybe it would disillusion me."

He walked over to the wardrobe and flung open the door, displaying a row of garments. "Your trousseau for today," he told her with a twisted smile.

There was a white satin lastex swim suit. White flannel slacks and matching tailored blouse. An exquisite blue broadcloth ensemble with platinum fox collar. A heavenly evening gown of silver-shot net over white taffeta.

"If it isn't asking too much," she suggested, cheeks flaming, "you might tell me your plans."

He recounted them on his fingers. "First, a swim. Breakfast on the terrace. Then a tour of the house and gardens perhaps?" He paused, looking at her shyly. "It's quite an interesting estate. I—sort of hope you'll find it worthwhile exploring."

She dropped her gaze quickly, his eyes were suddenly so hungry looking.

He went on, recovering his casual manner. "After lunch I thought we'd take in the races at Heatherdown."

"And have half the people from home see us?" she reminded him bitterly.

He frowned. "Bliss Colby," he mused, "and Dick Bishop, seen at the

races together. No, it wouldn't do. I forgot for the moment, this is a counterfeit honeymoon."

She laughed. "You've a strange idea of a honeymoon, wanting to go places all the time. Honeymooners usually want to be alone—" She stopped, horrified.

He went on as if he hadn't heard her. "Tonight we'll drive up to Cleveland—it's only thirty miles—and take in a swank new night club. I feel sure you won't meet any of your socialite friends there."

Bliss thought, with a catch of the heart, "And after the night club—what?"

His telltale eyes seemed to answer her, "Tonight, my darling, you're mine!"

THE thing that remained most vividly in Bliss's memory of that strange, unbelievable morning, was the blind humiliation she felt when they sat at breakfast on the terrace, and a sweet-faced, white-haired old lady came out with the maid and supervised her serving them.

When they left, Dick eyed Bliss mockingly. "You needn't worry. The maid is new. The—housekeeper will say nothing."

Yet she flamed with embarrassment and shame. What did that motherly-looking old lady think? She did not look the type who would approve of secret rendezvous, however well she might be paid. Yet obviously the situation was not new to her. Dick's own words assured her that she was not the first girl he had brought here for a week-end honeymoon!

Suddenly she felt afraid. For despite the fact that Dick had brought her here, she had not really believed he was that kind of man.

She did not see the woman again until midafternoon when she sat curled in a deep chair in the music room, listening to Dick playing. Turning, at a slight sound across the room, Bliss saw the woman enter and slip unobtrusively into a chair near the door.

"Well, mother," Dick greeted her jokingly. "Feel like a little rug-cutting?"

She beamed at him fondly. "Go on with your playing," she smiled. "I just want to listen, close."

Dick played on for an hour, joking occasionally with her, his dark eyes flashing mocking glances at Bliss.

"I suppose you know she adores you," Bliss remarked bitterly, when the woman left as quietly as she had come. "You sounded as if she might really be your mother."

"She's sweet enough to be anybody's, isn't she?" was Dick's comment.

And then it was eleven o'clock that night. It was the Lake Forest Club, Cleveland's newest, most exclusive night spot.

Bliss sat opposite Dick at an intimate little table near the massive bronze doors that led to the gambling quarters beyond. All around them was the air of smooth sophistication found in such establishments operating against the law.

Bliss wore the silver-shot net with its billowing skirt and brief bodice molded to her waist. Her pale hair was coiled coronet-fashion around her head.

All during dinner, friends of Dick's stopped at their table, greeted him gaily. He was friendly with them all, but he introduced Bliss merely as "a girl from home," and gave them to understand that he wanted to be alone with her. So no one lingered.

Now Bliss sat tense, outlining circles with her cocktail glass on the table, fighting the panic that had been rising

steadily within her all evening.

She thought desperately, "I can't dance with him again! It isn't love, this feeling I have for him." It couldn't be, because she loved Stan Todd. And never had she felt like this with Stan.

This was standing in a tower of flame when Dick's arms closed around her. Aching for his lips whenever he stopped kissing her. Wanting him, hungering for him when he left her alone, even for a minute. This was madness.

And it was being afraid of what might happen tonight when he took her back to his cabin on the lake. Not for herself was she afraid, but that he might destroy this breathless, precious something she felt toward him.

She wanted to remember him as the kind of man she knew he could be. He was so sweet when he wasn't mocking her. He could be every girl's dream-lover come true.

Suddenly his low laugh scattered her thoughts. "I've been talking to you," he told her, "for five minutes. You haven't heard a word. It isn't very flattering. I'm not used to having my girls not pay attention."

"Sorry. Was it important?"

"I said I thought my week-end bride is a little—dazzled by too many champagne cocktails. Your lovely eyes are wild-looking, my sweet."

"Isn't that the usual procedure? To dazzle the girl with drink?" she suggested tightly. "I've heard it releases one's inhibitions."

"Is that why you're doing it?" His dark eyes glittered as he bent toward her.

She said flatly, "Yes."

And then suddenly she stiffened as if electrified. For through the heavy bronze doors that swung open to admit a small crowd of people, she saw Stan leaning over a green baize table.

JUST a glimpse, but it was stamped against her brain like a picture of fire. He was swaying a little, drunkenly, his arm across the shoulders of a red-haired girl in a silver gown, hugging her against him.

Bliss sat motionless after the doors closed, shutting out the picture. Then she heard herself asking Dick to excuse her for a minute.

His back was to those doors. He wouldn't see her go in, if she went first to the Powder Room, out the front door of the club and back through that little side entrance.

She didn't know what she would do or say, once she was in that room. But it was as if strange hands were urging her resistlessly to hurry there.

Five minutes later she was standing behind Stan at the roulette table. He had not yet seen her. She would wait until the play was over; the turn of the wheel upon which, she gathered from the excited conversation of the crowd, he was betting five thousand dollars.

Others seemed loath to play. They kept staring at Stan, commenting excitedly upon his amazing luck. Stan himself swayed drunkenly against the table. Piles of chips were stacked high before him. His arm was still around the red-haired girl whom Bliss had never seen before.

"What say, sweetheart?" he cried suddenly, hugging the girl close. "I can't lose. Shall we shoot the works?"

"Why not?" she giggled tipsily, burrowing her head against his shoulder. "More where that came from. Didn't you say Dick Bishop's a friend of yours? He's lousy rich."

"Friend of a girl friend of mine," Stan corrected with a sly chuckle. "And you're right, baby. Plenty more where this came from."

With a sweeping gesture, he shoved the stacks of chips toward the wheel.

"All on the seven pocket!" he cried to the tender of the machine.

A gasp of horror swept round the table, and the wheel began to spin.

Slowly Bliss turned. Dark eyes wide, staring blindly before her, she walked out of the room.

What did it matter if he won or lost? He was using Dick's money to gamble. If he didn't lose it now, he would eventually.

As she had seen Stan tonight, so would he be until he died. His father had been wise, to tie up his inheritance. If he had not, there would be nothing left now.

So she was a friend of Stan's, was she? And he could discuss her like that with a girl whose very existence she had never dreamed of until now.

What did he care how she had got that money from Dick, so long as she got it?

Dick rose, held out her chair as she approached. But she did not sit down.

"You're ill, Bliss!" he exclaimed, his dark eyes searching her face.

"No." She smiled at him. "I'd like another champagne cocktail, please."

He shook his head. "We're leaving immediately."

Her eyes fell upon his half-full glass. As she reached for it, his hand shot out, clamped round her wrist.

"If you must drink," he said furiously, "wait until we get home. I've champagne there."

"Oh, fine." She laughed at him, her eyes fever-bright. So he loved her, did he? But that didn't prevent him from exacting his pound of flesh tonight; nor from entertaining another girl at his other home all week.

Stan loved her, too, he said. But that didn't prevent him from sweethearting other girls, gambling away the money that would have meant their marriage

What was this thing called love, anyway? A juggling act?

AN HOUR later they were entering the enchanting little hall with the marble-tiled floor and vaulted ceiling and romantic circular balcony. Lights glowed softly on tall silver standards at the archway to the living room.

Suddenly Bliss stopped, looked around as if seeing it all for the first time. Over her shoulder she sighed raptly at Dick.

She said deliberately, "I could love you for luxury like this, even if I hadn't been paid to—darling!"

It was the first time she had ever called him darling.

Dick's hands gripped her shoulders, pulled her back to him hard. "Why have you changed so?" he asked harshly. "Up to an hour ago, you were scared to death."

"And now I'm not?" Her eyes were bright between the narrowed lids. "Up to an hour ago, I was a blind fool. Now I want to know the answers."

"Okay," he said slowly. "I'll tell you —with trimmings. Go up to your bedroom and change into the things you'll find on the bed. Then come back to the living room. I'll play you in with music—appropriate music, my sweet!"

The hard shell that had encased her heart since she saw Stan cracked a moment later when she stood in her bedroom, staring down at the garments that lay on the bed.

There was a pair of white satin pajamas, sheer as clouddrift. There was a coral house coat, exquisitely tailored. A pair of white satin mules.

Bliss covered her face with trembling hands. "He can't!" she whispered desperately. "Not if he loves me—not if he ever loved me!"

Ten minutes later, dressed in the pajamas and house coat, pale head held high, she came slowly down the stairway to the living room. And Dick played her in with music.

He played the Wedding Song from "Robin Hood" softly, hauntingly, tearing the very heart from her. But as she crossed the room to him, he began to improvise, playing the same music in swingtime.

Her eyes met his over the piano, mocking, furious, hating her. It didn't matter. What could matter now?

She knew she would love him until death and after, and there was nothing she could do about it. She couldn't tell him, because he would never believe her now. He would only say that she was appealing to his chivalry.

She stood quietly beside him. Dick flung his head back against her breast.

"Kiss me!" he commanded. "As if you really meant it. As if you really belonged to me—not for just tonight, but always."

Blindly her head went down, her mouth on his mouth. His arms crushed her to him, and as he rose, he bent her against him as if cradling her, their bodies swaying with the terrific force of their emotion.

Lips sealed to lips; arms wrapped around each other in fever and passion. Bliss clung to him breathlessly, memorizing the ecstasy of his kiss against the time when he would kiss her no more.

Dick picked her up and carried her across the room, stumbling a little. He laid her on the lounge, trembling violently. Then, kneeling beside her, he took his mouth away from hers and buried his face against her throat. Her hands pressed against his dark head, cherishing him closer.

"And you can say this isn't love," he said, in a strangled voice. "You can kiss me like that, and hold me like this and deny that it is love."

He jerked his head upright, and she saw the muscles of his jaw tighten. "Still you'd pay, wouldn't you?" he whispered hoarsely. "You'd pay my price, Bliss."

She shook her head slowly. "You wouldn't ask me to, Dick," she said, low. "I know that now. Probably I've known it all along and that's why I came. I didn't have to."

"No, you didn't have to," he agreed. "I'd have given you the money in any case. You know that, too."

She said thoughtfully, "But I have to tell you—you might never get that money back." Then, eyes averted, she explained in a strained voice about seeing Stan at the night club.

He did not move until she finished. Then abruptly he drew his arms from her and stood up. "It's all right," he said in a clipped voice. "Forget the money."

His eyes were cold and closed against her. "You love him so much? You were heartbroken when you saw him tonight. That's why you changed so suddenly. You'd have given me my moment of paradise if I asked it, wouldn't you, Bliss? Because you just didn't give a hang what happened."

She could no longer hold back the tears. "Tell me, Dick," she murmured. "Why did you make such a play to get me to come with you this week-end? Why did you want me so much?"

He stared at her silently for a moment, his lips a straight, white line. And then he broke into passionate speech.

"Because I love you! Everything I've done, all that I am, I owe to my love for you. It was so strong I thought you must return it some day.

"Oh, Dick!" It was a low, stricken cry.

He went on savagely, "Then I came back last Sunday night to ask you to marry me. You kissed me—how you kissed me, Bliss! But you laughed at the thought that I dared to love you. You came to me the very next morning, asking for money—to help him!"

He broke off and swung furiously off down the room.

"I went a little insane, I think. I wasn't good enough to love you, but I was good enough to lend you money. I wanted to strike back at you. But more than that, I wanted to make love to you, Bliss. Just once."

He gestured impatiently. "Get up! Go and dress. We'll leave immediately, of course. The masquerade is over, my dear. Or should I say our honeymoon that never could begin? Perhaps it might ease your conscience to know that we've been properly chaperoned all along. That is my mother, the little old lady you said was so sweet. She knows I love you with every breath I draw."

As he swung blindly away from her, Bliss caught his hand and drew him back to her. "But if I don't want it to be over?" she whispered breathlessly. "If I—want the honeymoon to begin?"

His hand tightened convulsively. She could not look at him. She said, "I'm trying to tell you, that I'm not going to marry Stan. I don't know what kind of love it was I felt for him, but it isn't the kind I feel for you."

She turned her face against the pillows. "Maybe you don't want to hear it now; maybe you'll never believe me. I don't know when it began—probably that night five years ago.

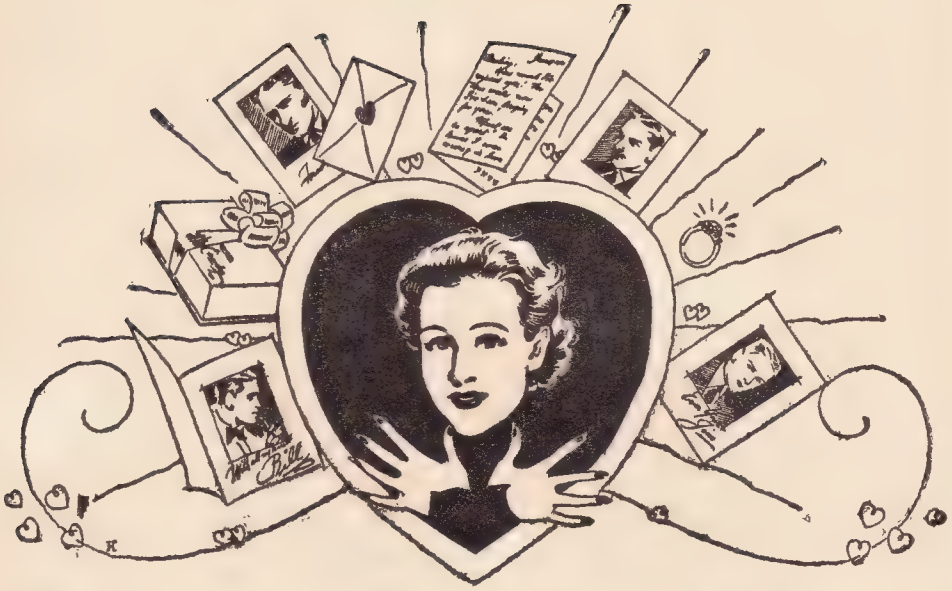
"I want to go down on my knees and worship you, Dick. I want to belong to you in all the ways a woman can belong to the man she loves. I live only the moments when you're with me. That's the way I love you."

She felt him sitting down beside her.

"Look at me, dear," he begged. And when she didn't, he turned her flushed face from the pillows. He looked at her almost fearfully, but there was nothing in her dark, starry eyes to make him afraid.

"Oh, my dearest!" He pressed his face against hers, hard. And she knew from the way he held her to him, as if every inch of her had been precious beyond words, that he believed her now.

His mouth on hers was more unbearably wonderful than the most beautiful words could ever be. And the glory of their love wrapped around them and shut out the world. Not for just tonight—for always.



Your Love Affairs

ALLIE LOWE MILES

The "Eyes" Have IT

Do Your Eyes Lure As Well As See?

WOMEN who charm men know the power of their eyes. A woman can say more with a pair of beautiful eyes than she dares to put into words.

Eyes were not only made for seeing; they were made to express love. And eyes can do far happier things than cry. They can talk, smile, show sympathy, understanding; even a glance can encourage or repeal; and when a woman is in love, her eyes can laugh with happiness.

What has happened that women are paying more attention to their eyes than they have for years? Perhaps you say, "Because it is fashionable to make-up the eyes." Yes, that is one reason. Another is that when a woman begins to concentrate on herself, she has found that quick and beautiful results can be obtained by improving the appearance of her eyes.

A third reason was given to me by a woman in her forties—a very smart, well-groomed woman—who said, "I was

so tired of seeing my same old reflection in the mirror. I decided to change the shape of my eyebrows and make-up my eyes in an attempt to make myself over. I did and it transformed me. I was a different person in appearance; I felt different, too, and began to be accepted as more of a person. My success with my eyes encouraged me to concentrate on other features in an attempt to improve myself." And having seen her, I can say she succeeded.

Women cultivate their beauty for different reasons: To please men. To please themselves. Because it is the smart and fashionable thing to do.

But there is nothing new about beauty culture. Centuries ago that great charmer of men, Cleopatra, used cosmetics to make herself more seductive and beautiful. In addition to using henna on her hair and her toe nails and finger nails, she used rouge on her face. Scents on her body. Oils on her hair. And she applied kohl lavishly on her eyelids and eyebrows to make her eyes appear larger and more luminous so that she could better attract and hold the love of great men.

The allure of penciled eyebrows, vivid lips and rouged cheeks is not new by any means. The art of cosmetics in the bedroom is merely the continuance of world-old customs conceived by women to lure and charm the opposite sex. Not just for the sport of luring, but because there is something in a woman that demands the attention of a man, and although men will not admit that cosmetics are the bait that hooks them, we know it has a lot to do with helping us land them.

Stand so that the sunlight falls on your face and hold a mirror, preferably one that magnifies, so that you can see both of your eyes at the same time. Are they lovely and alluring? Or, are they screaming hideously for attention?

Years can be lifted from a woman's face by cleaning up the area from the eyelashes to the arch of the eyebrows so that the eyes seem larger and more youthful. Eyes have the habit of shrinking in size with birthdays. Yet this effect may be overcome by weeding out the wild and overgrown eyebrows that grow down on the lids.

On the best-regulated faces, wild eyebrows are pulled with tweezers. Pull

out each hair separately until the upper part of the eyelid is free from this wild growth and the hair line arch above is definite and clean. Thus in their individual way, eyebrows are made expressive and brought out of confusion, and the natural arch of the brows follows the bone structure—the way nature intended.

To make a man happy in your presence you must make him feel a bit bigger than he really is—and far bigger than you are.

No two eyebrows, even on the same person, are identical in shape. In cultivating them do not destroy the individuality that nature has given you. However, you can do more for the alluring beauty of your face by making them a bit more perfectly matched. Just weed them out every other day.

It is old-fashioned to have heavy, scraggly brows that are scattered over the lid of the eye. Also it is bad taste to shave or pluck all of the natural eyebrows and sketch an artificial arch with a pencil. That is a beauty trick good only across the footlights—never in private life.

It may be unwise for you to copy the shape of Marlene Dietrich's eyebrows because your eyes are shaped differently. Be individual! Cultivate your own style of beauty. Bring out your own personality, and who knows, you may emerge with features even more beautiful than famous beauties of history and Hollywood.

Now after cultivating the shape of your eyebrows, think of your eyelashes. Eyelashes give the eyes decided lure and fascination. Long, curled lashes, growing thick from the lids, indicate youth and health. It is sad to see so many young girls with short, scraggly lashes due to the wrong use of eye cosmetics.

White vaseline is helpful in keeping eyelashes long and thick. Apply it with your finger tips before you go to bed. And always remove mascara or eyelash darkener with something which does not irritate the eyes.

It is important to be careful in your selection of eye cosmetics. Refrain from piling mascara heavily on the lashes. A famous artist told me the other day that he will never employ a model who loads her lashes with "that black stuff," and yet, I have seen this same artists rave about the beauty of models who cleverly darkened their brows and lashes with that art that adds fascination.

Eyes that have "oomph" are in the person's head who knows how to use them.

Sparkling eyes belong to the happy, cheerful thinker.

Half-closed eyes belong to the dreamy type of woman.

Wide-open eyes belong to inquisitive youth.

Drooping eyes belong to the weary old people.

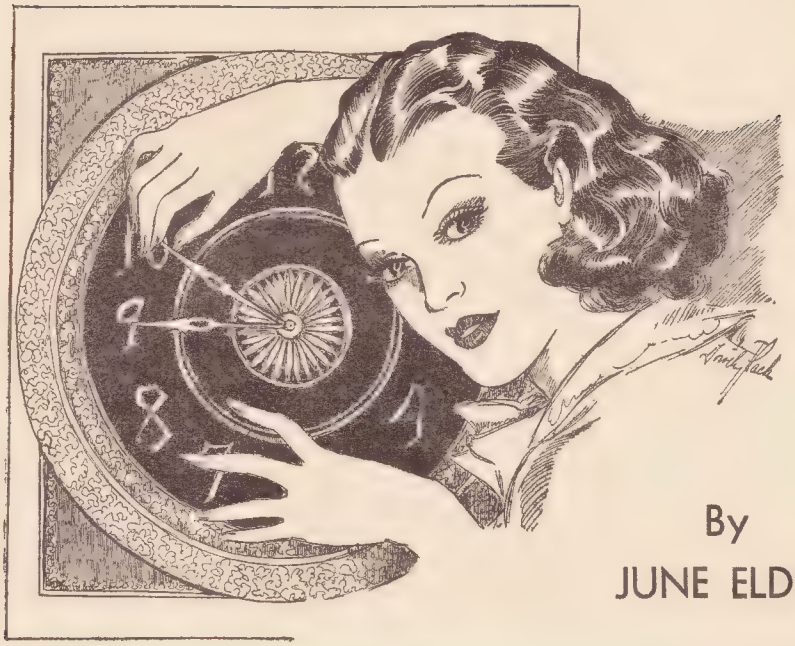
But even young girls have birthdays, and at the pace maintained by the younger generation, youngsters are appearing to be older than their birthdays indicate. Too bad to throw youthful beauty away. It means more later on and is difficult to regain. As new birthdays are added, every woman's face has a tendency to droop—the mouth and all the muscles, the expression, and the eyes!

Wide-open eyes are characteristic of youthful beauty. So, unless you are asleep, keep your eyes open. Acquire the habit of glancing interestedly from one thing to another. Learn to smile more often with your eyes. Practice making them twinkle, making them laugh, but never let them weep.

I heard one of our big football heroes of this past season say "Joan? Gosh! How could a fellow look in her eyes and not fall for her?"

Cultivate the beauty of your eyes and you will be repaid by having some man feel that way about you.

(*Continued on page* 79)



By
JUNE ELDER

One rival Jane knew how to stop was—a clock

Lovelight Saving Time

JANE stirred out of the delicious drowsiness into which she'd drifted over her notes in the wide wing armchair. As usual she'd been dreaming of Terry. Even the most discreet and efficient secretary has her lapses.

She closed her eyes, yearning to recapture the ebbing delight. And then she heard his own beloved voice speaking words that had never sounded even in her wildest dreams.

"I love you, darling. Too much to be put off any longer. I never thought I could want anything in this world as much as I want you for my wife."

Jane caught her breath painfully. She jammed her nail hard into the quick of her thumb. She was suddenly stark, staring wide awake. Terry had come into the study.

Then the spell broke, splintering like a hundred daggers in her heart, as Erna Winslowe's low, complacent laugh sounded.

"Terry, sweet! You're so impetuous. Is it fair to try to sweep me off my feet? You know I'm fond of you—more than fond, when you hold me like this."

Jane huddled deeper into the sheltering chair. Her hands pressed hurtingly against her faded sweater. Surely Terry and Erna must hear the thumping of her heart through the vibrant silence.

But after a minute she realized that nothing less than a bombshell could disturb them. She knew too well what caused that sudden stillness.

"How can you kiss me so without caring enough to put me out of torment?" Terry challenged. His deep voice was ragged with strain. "Don't you realize it has to be all or nothing between us? I've tried to be patient, but there are limits to a man's endurance. For three mortal weeks you've kept me dangling. I must have my answer."

"Suppose it's no?" Erna purred provocatively. "Marriage is a big step for a girl, lover. Give me just a little longer."

"I'll give you till exactly ten o'clock tonight to make up your mind." Terry's tone held the ring of finality. "I'll be working here all evening. You can reach me by telephone at any time."

"But, darling, aren't you coming to the Country Club dance? I know you're peeved because I promised to go with Bud Eliot, but we can slip away."

"I've had all I can take of this hole-and-corner love-making," Terry insisted doggedly. "Besides I can't let my work slide the way I've been doing. Jane's counting on me tonight to go over some material she's been slaving to get in shape for the publishers. We'll be through by ten, and then I can come over to the Club to announce our engagement."

"Really, darling, if you're out to make me jealous, you'd better dig up better competition than that funny little thing you call a secretary," Erna scoffed.

"I can't allow even you to speak of Jane like that!" Terry's quick warmth was bitter-sweet balm to the sick heart of the girl in the shadows. "I owe more of my success to Jane than anyone realizes. She's a fine, serious, sensible girl."

"So what? Men of your type don't marry fine, serious, sensible girls," Erna teased impishly.

"No? Well, if I don't hear from you by ten o'clock, I'll ask Jane to marry me. And it's better luck than I'll deserve if she takes me up on it."

"Well, there's certainly no accounting for tastes!" Erna flounced out of the room in a huff. A gust of her heady jasmine scent enveloped Jane with sickening sweetness as she whisked past the chair, in a cloud of rosy chiffon.

For once Terry didn't follow to heel. He stood tamping his pipe tobacco and whistling softly, while Jane sat rigid with terror. Suppose he turned and saw her! But after a moment he strode out, slamming the door sharply after him.

She scrambled out of her cramped position then and stretched like a cat. But it didn't take the kinks out of her heart.

Jane had been put through the works, too, these three interminable weeks.

What could she do but sit tight and watch the merriment fade from Terry's frank blue eyes, while lines of pain and humiliation etched themselves round his mouth?

She knew with dread certainty that Erna's coy tactics were just fireworks to dazzle him. Of course she meant to marry him. But she'd wait till thirty seconds to ten to tell him so.

Jane sat staring at the clock like one hypnotized. Terry was not the man to make idle threats, even when goaded almost beyond himself by infatuation. He'd sworn to propose to Jane if he didn't hear from Erna by ten. It was almost too easy!

For two years Jane had developed his camera slides, checked cross-references and compiled card indexes, loving him all the time. She'd accepted her heartache as chronic, and now suddenly the cure was in reach of her hand.

It wasn't as if Erna would ever make Terry happy. Her flirtations and extravagances would be his ruin. He'd have to go back to writing potboilers of travel adventure, when his whole heart was set on scientific research. Microscopic studies of deep sea life brought lean pickings. It would take every penny he could raise to meet Erna's demands.

Jane picked up the clock as gingerly as if it had been a time bomb. Deliberately she set the hands forward half an hour.

TWO hours later Jane sat at the flat-topped desk, awaiting her first proposal. Her russet hair was brushed smooth and gleaming as a horse chestnut. The white crepe blouse was much more sheer and frilly than any she'd ever worn. And she'd put on lipstick. Two hectic spots of color flamed high on her delicate cheekbones, and her hazel eyes were unnaturally bright.

The clock pointed to seven forty-five when Terry flung his big lanky frame into the swivel chair. From a distant wing of the house came the drone of somebody's radio.

"How can we work with that darned thing bleating away?" he growled.

Jane held her breath in agonized suspense. Suppose he recognized the voice of the news commentator going on the air half an hour late, according to the clock. She sprang to the window and slammed it shut.

"What's the idea of keeping the room hermetically sealed?" Terry protested. "It's a gorgeous night. There'll be a full moon up in another hour." He slammed shut the card catalogue and dragged a heavy file to the top of the desk. "We've got a raft of work to get through. Start by reading off those slide titles like a good child."

For two hours they plowed through the jaw-breaking Latin names, while Terry smoked incessantly and paced the room with jerky strides.

"What's the time?" he demanded abruptly.

"Nine forty-five," Jane faltered.

"I can't hear when you mumble like that."

"I said nine forty-five," she repeated woodenly.

"It can't possibly be that late!"

"Look at the clock yourself."

As he turned to look, the telephone shrilled. Jane leaped to answer it, and the stack of precious slides on her lap went crashing to the floor in a hundred pieces.

"Oh, Terry!" she gasped. "I don't know what to say! Why, it means months and months of work."

"Shut up, and give me that phone!" He grabbed the instrument out of her

shaking hands. "Hello, hello! . . . What? *No!* This isn't the liquor store."

He banged down the receiver and stood glowering at it. "Wrong number! I just don't believe it. The wires must be crossed or something."

Suddenly he became aware of Jane at his feet, dejectedly picking up the shattered fragments. Her even white teeth caught hard at her lower lip but, struggle as she would for control, hot tears spilled down her cheeks. He laid an absent hand on her shoulder.

"Accidents will happen, kid. It's all in a lifetime, and other quaint Chinese proverbs to you." He cupped her trembling chin in his broad palm and tilted her face upward. "Turn off the waterworks, there's a good scout."

Something snapped inside Jane at his touch. She scrambled to her feet with blazing eyes. "Don't you even care about the slides?" she choked. "Why, you risked your life to get some of them."

"So what?" He shrugged. "It seems my life isn't worth a wooden nickel to anyone." His eyes strayed once more to the clock.

"Oh, Terry, it was awful of me!" Jane protested. "Why don't you bawl the daylights out of me as I deserve?" Her face crumpled piteously.

"Please, Jane! Tears are one thing I can't take," he snapped in exasperation. Then his face softened and he pulled her gently round, smoothing the hair back from her hot brow with clumsy gentleness. "It's my fault you've got the jitters. You've been working yourself to death while I've been slacking. Better call it a night and scoot along home to bed."

"Are you going to stay here?" Her fearful eyes followed his to the clock, now pointing at seven minutes to ten.

"Not much longer." His square jaw set resolutely, and she saw his hand clench round the bronze paperweight till the veins stood out and the knuckles gleamed white.

Mechanically she went about the business of setting the study to rights, taking all the time she could over each small detail.

She was sick all through with misgivings. What a naïve little fool she'd been to think Terry seriously meant to propose to her if Erna stood him up! The clock said five minutes past ten when she slipped into her plaid reefer. But of course it was really only twenty-five minutes to the hour he'd set for Erna's ultimatum.

It seemed as if she couldn't leave him with that defeat etched in every line of his fine face. She swallowed hard and opened her lips to say, "By the way, I forgot to say that clock's half an hour fast."

But before she could get out the words, Terry dragged up from his chair. "Guess I may as well walk you home," he said awkwardly. "My legs could do with a stretch."

"I thought you planned to look in on the Country Club dance," she reminded him nervously. Panic scudded through her veins as she saw the purposeful glint in his eyes. He had the look of a man who wants to get something disagreeable over with as quickly as possible.

"I'm not in a dancing mood," Terry said shortly. He opened the door and held it for her with a new formality.

THE moon was riding high above the arching giant elms as they passed down the deserted village street. Usually they had a lot to talk over together, but tonight both were tongue-tied.

Jane moistened her dry lips and

made a valiant effort. "You're worried about something, Terry. Can't you tell me what it is?"

"I'm afraid you'll laugh. But it's no joke, Jane. I know it's very sudden and yet—well, we've known each other a long time and, all in all, we get on pretty well together. You know I'm not a romantic sort of chap, and you're a fine sensible girl—"

He broke off and thrust both hands deep into his trouser pockets, striding on with quickening step.

How he hates this! Jane thought wretchedly. If I had any pride I'd say no. Instead, she linked her hand through his arm and felt a faint tightening of his muscles in quick response.

"Go on, Terry," she encouraged him. "I promise I won't laugh."

"I—you—Oh, hang it all, Jane, will you marry me or won't you?" he burst out.

"Do you really mean it, Terry?" Her soft contralto was vibrant with wistfulness. "You're asking me to be your wife?"

"Yes, I am!" He almost shouted the words. "Well, what about it? Can't you say something one way or the other?"

"Yes, Terry. I'll marry you whenever you like."

He stopped dead and stared unbelievingly into her uplifted face. "Do you—do you love me, Jane?" he asked incredulously.

"You haven't said anything about loving me, Terry," she reminded him. "But you might at least kiss me, for luck."

"Well, I'll be—why, you little scamp!" He stood staring down at her as if she'd been some particularly surprising marine specimen. Then his arms went out slowly and gathered her close, so close that she could feel the strong, steady beat of his heart against the frightened racing of her own.

Now his lips were on hers. Warm and incredibly sweet, but passionless. She stood very still, not daring to give way to the surge of surrender that his touch sent flooding through her body.

The boom of the church clock smote the stillness of the night.

Terry jerked back his head at the first stroke. "Listen! What's that?" His hands tightened on her arms convulsively.

"Just eleven o'clock striking!" she gasped painfully, knowing it was only ten. "I had no idea it was so late."

"Are you sure? Six—seven—"

"Terry, you *can't* stop to count the clock in the middle of kissing the girl you mean to marry!"

Her arms locked frantically round his neck. She stood on tiptoe and pressed her mouth to his in a long, desperate kiss. A kiss that rocked time into nothingness as the last stroke of the hour was lost in the mounting tumult of young blood.

"Why, Jane!" Terry drew back and ran both hands through his thick hair. "Jane!" he repeated incredulously. "I never dreamed you could kiss like that."

Her cheeks flamed furiously, but the elms cast a sheltering shadow over her face. All the love she'd felt for Terry before seemed a mere flickering spark beside this sudden burst of glory. She could never give him up now; not to anyone.

"Don't be silly, darling." Just the right to call him that was honey and nectar on her tongue. "We're going to be married, aren't we? What kind of kiss did you expect?"

"Guess I hadn't thought much about it." He grinned crookedly.

Jane managed a shaky little laugh. "Were you signing me on to check your card catalogues for life? Proposing one of those phony marriages-in-name-only you read about in Victorian novels?" she challenged. "Why, Terence Adams, I'm surprised at you!"

"No more surprised than I am—at both of us." He laughed, and it was a good sound to hear. "They say still waters run deep. Well, you've certainly dragged me way out of my depth!"

They walked on in silence till they reached the white swing gate of her roominghouse.

"Look," Terry said, "if it's only a little after eleven, the dance ought to be going strong for another hour. How about looking in and springing our announcement?"

Jane winced inwardly. He wanted, of course, to show Erna he'd made good on the bluff she called. Suppose she told him she'd tried to call before ten!

"No, Terry," she said quickly. "It—it wouldn't do at all."

He frowned. "I suppose you can't very well turn up in a blouse and skirt. Look, Jane, can't you borrow some sort of party dress? I should almost think a nightgown would do, from some of the things the girls turn up in."

That stung to the quick. But of course Terry couldn't know about the daffodil crepe she'd picked up at a sale, just in case—

"I'll be ready in five minutes. No, make it ten! And I'll try not to make you ashamed of me." She started up the steps but whirled at the top. "Incidentally, you might be interested to know, Mr. Adams, that I don't wear nightgowns. I sleep in pajamas."

"And I'll bet you look darned cute in 'em," Terry chuckled. "Well, I'll be seeing for myself before long."

MANY heads turned to stare at the slim, vivid girl whirling in Terence Adams' arms over the polished floor. His famous scarab ring gleamed conspicuously on her left hand as it lay against the darkness of his coat.

Jane's face, with the winged bronze brows arching above sparkling hazel eyes, was nothing to make artists faint with joy. Nor was the $12.98 yellow crepe, sheathing her supple body, worth a second glance. But she was transformed with vibrant aliveness. Hardly anyone recognized her as that nice little person who slipped in and out of public library and post office on rubber-soled shoes.

Terry's arms tightened possessively every time a stag attempted to cut in. "Sorry, old man! I'm staking a monopoly here," he would grin over his shoulder. Or "We just got ourselves engaged. Not at home to visitors."

It was there for everyone to see, his boyish elation and pride of conquest. Terry was never one for grudging half-measures.

But more than once Jane was aware of his eyes straying over her head to Erna, in aquamarine satin that left almost nothing of her voluptuous loveliness to the imagination. She floated past now and then with Bud Eliot, her golden head snuggled against his shoulder, eyes closed in apparent oblivion. Like an ostrich burying its head in the sand, Jane thought hotly.

The Saturday night curfew came all too soon. Promptly at twelve the music stopped, and the crowd broke up into intimate foursomes, headed for roadhouses and private homes.

"Are we to understand congratulations are in order?" Erna sauntered up to them with Bud Eliot in tow. There was a mocking twist to her ripe coral lips.

"*I* am the one to be congratulated." Terry stepped into the breach quickly, almost too quickly.

Jane tried not to read the message his eyes flashed into Erna's, but she couldn't miss it: "I told you I'd do it and I did. Now see how you like it."

"Well, let's go places and celebrate." Erna linked one arm through Bud's and laid her other soft white hand on Terry's coat sleeve, ignoring Jane's existence. "The night's just a baby and I'm in the mood for fun."

"Sorry, I'm not playing." Terry turned to Jane with a great show of solicitude. "I'm taking my fiancée home. We've had a pretty heavy evening."

"You must have!" Erna laughed significantly. "Too preoccupied even to answer the telephone." She turned to Bud with a shrug. "Remember giving me a nickel just before ten o'clock so I could ring Terry?"

"I remember," Bud said sourly. "Checked my watch by the church clock while I was waiting for you to come out of the phone booth."

"Well, night-night," said Erna brittlely. "See you all in church—maybe."

A choked feeling rose in Jane's throat. She did not dare to look at Terry. Bleakly she followed him out.

"And that, it seems, is that," he muttered. He stood for a moment, whistling between his teeth, while Jane's heart turned over at the familiar trick. She'd heard it so often in

"You haven't said anything about loving me, Terry, but you could kiss me, just for luck"

the laboratory or study. It meant Terry's mind was made up for better, for worse.

"Like to go anywhere?" he asked flatly.

Where indeed? Except straight into his arms. But a girl didn't ask a man to make love to her. Not when she had bound him to her by a trick.

"I'm tired," she answered in a small voice. "You don't have to see me home. I'm used to getting around by myself."

"Jane, you sound upset and not a bit like yourself. You're not by any chance regretting your rash promise to become Mrs. Terence Adams?"

She steeled herself against the veiled eagerness in his tone. "I'm not regretting anything, Terry."

"Well, we haven't anything to wait for except the license," he said after another strained pause. "I'll see about it the first thing Monday morning. Then we'll check out. I don't much care where we head, so long as it's away from here. Got any special fancy in honeymoons?"

It was as matter-of-fact as if he had been mapping out one of his lecture tours. But it was more than she deserved.

"Could we go as far as the Caribbean?" she asked breathlessly. "I'd love to see those little islands—the Grenadines, you call them. Or that place in the Honduras where the tropical eel got away from you. Maybe we could land another one between us, Terry!"

She sensed a leap of his old enthusiasm at the very names. But he shook his head slowly. "I thought you'd done enough work with me to be cured of romantic notions about that part of the world. Why, it's enough to send any bride screaming home to mother. Hurricanes, vampire bats, earthquakes—"

"You said yourself I wasn't romantic," she reminded him quickly. "I have a pretty fair idea what those out-of-the-way haunts are like. But they're your life, Terry, the life you've asked me to share. The kind of life you love better than it's in you to love any girl."

"I believe you've got something there," he admitted soberly. "Jane, I can't see what you stand to win out of this—arrangement. You've got the habit of putting my interests ahead of your comfort or your inclinations. It makes me feel very humble, my dear, and scared, too. Scared for you. Understand?"

She understood only too well. Her throat ached with a yearning that held her speechless.

"Stop and think what you're letting yourself in for," he urged. "You don't have to rush into anything just because I was foolish enough to broadcast our engagement all over town tonight. I can stand the gaff of being jilted if you think better of it in the morning."

"Well, I shan't!" Her head went up and she faced him squarely. "You only asked me to marry you for a gag. Now you want to be released gracefully from the offer. Well, for once I'm not considering your whims. If there's any jilting done, you'll have to be the one to do it."

He stared at her in amazement. "I can't make you out at all tonight, Jane. You're so fine and straightforward—"

"And sensible and unromantic," she supplied bitterly. "Oh, Terry, you don't know the least little bit what I'm like!" She made one last valiant effort. "There's something I ought to tell you," she faltered. "You probably won't want to marry me when you know."

"Then, skip it," he advised. "We can

make a go of things together if we keep looking forward, not back."

TOGETHER! The word was a magic carpet unrolled at her feet down the shining runway of a future with Terry. Her step gathered speed and sureness in the next few days.

The announcement of their engagement was an overnight sensation in the small New England town. The girls Terry had ignored in his pursuit of Erna rallied round Jane. Society matrons, who had been huffy when their invitations were referred to his secretary, now were eager to curry favor with his fiancée. The men were intrigued and gave her as much of a rush as Terry would permit.

It was a strange whirlwind courtship. Not a word of love passed between them. For Jane was too proud to say the things she knew Terry had no heart to echo.

His kisses were a shattering ecstasy. Surely no hurricane could be more overpowering than the tempest of desire that racked Jane when his arms tightened round her and his lips drew the very heart out of her. But always there was the torment of doubt to undermine the rapture.

When he held her so was he imagining Erna in his arms? Struggling to blot out her haunting image with kisses of passion?

For Terry wasn't the man to fall out of love in half an hour. Thirty stolen minutes of lovelight saving time.

Jane knew no security in her filched happiness. Too often that troubled bewilderment came into Terry's face, and Jane soon learned, without even following his gaze, that it meant Erna had come on the scene.

There were parties of all kinds packed into the brief time required for a license to be issued. And Erna was always very much in evidence. Breathtakingly exquisite in the delicate pastel shades that set off the pearly sheen of her skin and the bright gold of her skillfully tinted hair. She maintained a provocative aloofness toward Terry, and was always ready with a barbed quip at Jane's expense when he was out of earshot.

But everyone else was wonderfully kind. Much to Jane's surprise, Terry insisted on a church wedding. The minister and his wife couldn't do enough for the young people. There was a buffet supper on the parsonage lawn in their honor the night before the ceremony.

A homely, open-house affair with colored lanterns strung through the trees and the barn cleared for square dancing. Gallon jugs of cider and fragrant pots of coffee for the only liquid refreshment. A twelve-foot deal table laden with Mrs. Williams' famous chicken shortcake, three kinds of salad, freshly baked pies and a frosted bride's cake towering in the middle.

Jane's heart was light and glowing as a soap bubble in the sun. She looked like a dryad in her leaf-green voile with a knot of bright rowan berries tucked in her hair. Her clear eyes were wistful but shining.

"I don't deserve all this," she thought guiltily more than once. "I can't believe it's really coming true."

"Now, boys and girls," Mrs. Williams ordered briskly, after supper was cleared away, "before you start dancing, we've got to get up the church decorations."

A crowd trooped over to the little stone chapel across the lawn, carrying ropes of laurel to festoon the aisles and altar. Someone put a sheaf of prince's-feather and white asters in Jane's arms

with a cry of "Here comes the bride!"

Many hands made light work of the undertaking. But before the last altar vase was filled, Jane realized that something was wrong. Terribly wrong. For Terry was not one of the group. Nor was Erna.

She fought down suspicion with all her might. Only half the guests had come over to the church. Terry had probably been cornered by some garrulous old lady who wanted to ask his opinion on the best diet for her guppies. And Erna had been so obviously bored with the party, she must have left early with Bud Eliot or some other willing victim.

Jane lingered behind the rest in the stillness of the little church. Moonlight filtered through the leaded glass windows in a silver shaft along the aisle. She opened one of the worn prayer books, and her eye caught the words, "forsaking all others keep thee only unto her so long as ye both shall live." That was what Terry must promise tomorrow when they stood together before kind-eyed Mr. Williams at the altar.

She dropped to her knees and poured out her heart in a poignant, wordless prayer, then rose and went out into the silent churchyard with a sweet, singing peace in her heart.

A burst of music and clapping hands and stamping feet came from the barn. Jane hurried on noiseless feet over the grass to join the merrymaking. There was a short cut through the willows screening the bank of a little brook.

She parted the leafy curtains gently and set one sandaled foot on the tow path, then recoiled as if from an electric shock. For there stood Terry and Erna, locked heart to heart in a close embrace, his head bent imploringly above her uplifted face.

"Erna, I *must* kiss you! Just once."

Jane's hands flew to her ears to shut out the sound of his words. The willow branches slid lightly into place, but through the veil of leaves, she could see Erna's arms creep upward and tighten round his neck like the gleaming coils of a snake in the moonlight.

Her exultant laugh pierced Jane's throbbing eardrums. "It's not too late to take our happiness, lover. Thank Heaven for that!"

"Erna, I know I've behaved badly. I haven't played fair with you," Terry began.

But Jane could stand no more. She thrust through the willows and faced them both.

"I'm the one who hasn't played fair!" she cried.

"So now your precious fiancée comes spying on us," Erna sneered.

"I didn't mean to. But it's not the first time it's happened." Jane forced herself to meet Terry's amazed eyes and went on, even though every word seemed to be draining the life blood from her heart. "I happened to overhear all you said in the study, the day Terry swore he'd propose to me if you didn't call him by ten o'clock."

"Well, what of it?" Terry demanded as her voice failed.

"Just this. I deliberately set the clock forward half an hour. Do you understand? I cheated."

"*You* did that?" he exclaimed incredulously.

"Naturally!" Erna snapped. "Any girl in her position would jump at such a chance. You're too modest, Terry, to realize what a catch you are. Especially for a little nobody with no background and no prospects."

Terry turned on her abruptly. "Well, Erna, your mind seems to be made up at last about me," he said. "How

would you like to marry me tomorrow?"

"You *are* impatient, lover," the blond girl laughed lightly. "But I guess we can make it if you'll give me a few days in New York to shop for a trousseau."

"All you'll need will be several dozen yards of mosquito netting and some good stout shoes for the honeymoon I've planned," Terry said evenly. "We'll ship on a freighter and see what we can pick up in an old fishing smack of our own after we strike the Caribbean ports."

"What a s t u p i d joke!" Erna shrugged. "Bermuda or the Gaspé are the only places I'd consider for a honeymoon. Can you see me in a leaky tub smelling of fish?"

"No, Erna, I can't see you. I can't see you at all." Terry grinned. "So I suggest you shop around for a more suitable bridegroom, and leave me to a few words with that funny little thing I used to call a secretary. You'd be burned to a crisp if you had to listen to the things I'm planning to call her."

He drew Jane down the little winding path and gathered her chill hands in both his own. "The first thing we have to get straight," he said, "is a pretty messy snarl. I begged Erna for a kiss just now to prove to myself once and for all that her hold over me was broken. It was the surest way to lay the ghost of my infatuation for her. Can you believe that, darling?"

"I can believe anything you ask me to believe," Jane answered with her heart in her eyes. "I've loved you so long, Terry."

"Then why couldn't you say so, you little juggins?" He pulled her round with a rough little shake that merged into a hungry embrace. "You've had me half crazy trying to figure you out."

"But, Terry, couldn't you see?" she gasped. "All the while we've been working together it was there."

"I'd been living with my eye glued to a microscope for so long, I never saw any girl as a woman until I met Erna. Then I was dazzled—sun blind, they call it in the tropics. I meant to marry you on the rebound. But no rebound sends you plunging deeper and deeper in love with every hour."

His mouth sought her parted lips and gave assurance beyond words of their utter oneness. A new radiance shone in Jane's eyes. It was the lovelight that only the beacon of answering love can kindle. A glory to illumine all the years before them.

"Little wife so-soon-to-be!" he whispered adoringly.

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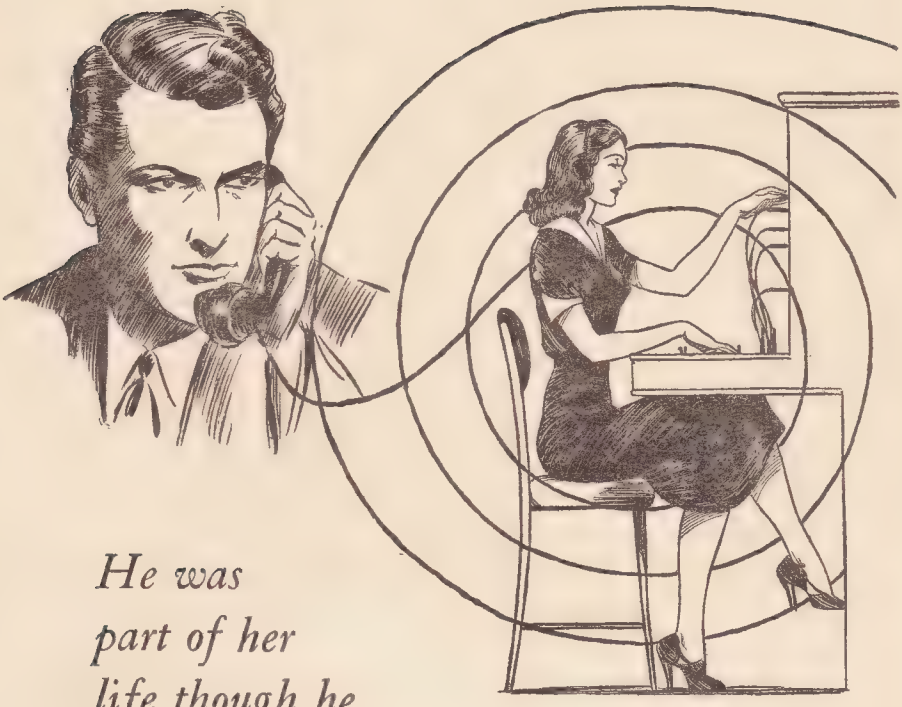


He was part of her life though he had never heard of her. She lived for glimpses into his private affairs

Toll Operator

By SIBYL SPANDE BOWEN

ALICIA slid down banks, past a million trees and bushes all reaching out to grab her with their naked arms, and managed to stop just short of the road. Head on, she landed in the biggest drift the snow scraper had piled up.

Some very good tweed arms ending in five-dollar pigskin gloves pulled her out, untangled her skis, and took the end of her red scarf out of her mouth. "Going some place?" the voice belonging to this haberdashery inquired pleasantly.

Alicia spat out a snowball, felt her arms and legs to make sure they were

all present. "I think I'm walking home from a buggy ride—on skis," she said crossly.

The man laughed. "Was he naughty?"

"I love to ski, and that's *all* I came for," she snapped. No use letting a perfect stranger in on Perry Stratton's caveman technique. "I'm really an awfully nice girl. And I'd like to get out of the scenery before my late escort arrives. He may be feeling peevish. You wouldn't give me a lift to the station?"

Perry was going to be more than peevish. She was quite sure she wanted lots of people—a whole restaurant full—near by when she saw him next.

"Would I! If you'll trust me for my good honest face, I'll take you clear into town. I stopped the car when I saw you coming."

Alicia leaned against the snowdrift while he unfastened her skis.

"You don't know me," he began, leading her toward the longest open car this side of the Atlantic, "so I'll—"

She jumped into the car. "No. Let's be anonymous. Ships in the night, a waved hand, a laugh, and a memory, faint, like an old flower. You know the line," she broke in lightly. Tell him her name, and she'd pass out of his mind like last night's cocktails. Now, he might give her a thought. The old mystery game—for him.

For she knew *his* name. You couldn't sit at your switchboard week after

Icy sophistication to her selfish fingertips, such was the girl Philip was too honorable to jilt

week without hearing, "This is Philip English. I want anybody at the Samuel English residence in Palm Beach, Florida." That was where he got that expensive-looking tan. Or, "I want to talk to Miss Helene Carfax, at Southampton." She was the debutante who was gunning for the English fortune.

Face to face, Alicia recognized the delightful accent that was part English public school, part Harvard, part all the cities of all the world. Oh, yes, she knew him.

His seventy miles slowed to forty. "There's a nice little place for tea around the next curve," he suggested, "where I'd like to stop long enough to look into Miss Anonymous' blue eyes. You know. Fix the memory."

The trick had worked! He'd noticed her eyes. "Sorry. I'd love to, but I've got a date at four."

"You would have," he said bitterly. "Catch the men of this or any town overlooking a face like yours."

Yes, thought Alicia, a date with sour old Kate Lane, the afternoon supervisor, and if I don't get there for my shift, heaven help the next installment on my gray spring suit. She smiled at him pertly. "I like your looks, too."

"No name?" This, when the swift, cold ride ended before Alicia's apartment. She was tempted, but quite firm with herself.

"No name. Goodby, Ship-in-the-Night." She was gone, skis and all. It was the only way. What profit could come of Alicia Gray, operator, knowing Philip English?

BUT it wasn't that easy. At four she was in her place at the toll board, wrestling with the early rush of calls. New York calling Chicago. Calling Cleveland. Farmingdale. Husbands who wouldn't be home for dinner. Husbands who were catching the 5:40 for Miami. Mechanically her voice went on, but her mind was seeing the lean brown face of Philip English in the maze of cords and jacks. Suddenly there was his voice, calling his father at the Long Island place.

"Tell Jack I'll drop in at the Peacock at five tomorrow. I'll wait for him ten minutes."

Instantly the drab noisy office swam in a golden haze. Alicia was floating on a sea of champagne.

"Good heavens, you dope," she moaned to herself, "don't imagine you're falling in love with this diamond-dusted playboy. It just isn't like you. Take a good look at yourself, you twenty-a-week hello gal, and try to come back to earth."

But she knew that nothing short of an air raid would prevent her from dressing up in the new gray suit with the blue satin blouse and being at the Peacock Restaurant at five the next day.

Yet she pretended to be completely surprised when he came up to her table. "You know this face when it's out from under a red hood and has civilized make-up on it?" she asked.

He sat down beside her. "You'd know a face, too, if you'd dreamed of its every line, from that fascinating widow's peak of black hair to the loveliest little chin that ever finished a face. I'm Philip English," he told her simply.

It was one of those things that thunder on you like an avalanche; that you can't for the life of you sidestep. One of those things that simply can't happen, but do. All the banter left her abruply. Suddenly she knew that he was as deadly serious as she was. They couldn't pretend any more.

"I'm Alicia Gray." Her throat was husky with emotion.

His eyes were hungry upon her. "Alicia! Just the name to go with those blue—or are they violet?—eyes. And that gorgeous skin. Do you know you're the loveliest thing on God's green earth?"

"Yes, Philip. When I look at you, I know I'm lovely—in your eyes," she said gravely.

They drank tea, and ate dozens of little cakes, simply looking at each other. It was a half hour of Paradise flashed on them out of an eternity of commonplace things. Reluctantly he moved at last to go.

"This has been all wrong, you know, darling. I haven't any business telling you I love you. I'm simply a cad," he told her in a husky voice, his brown eyes beseeching her.

Alicia shook her head. "No, it's been beautiful. I'm glad it happened. A high peak in a lifetime of little hills." Then, "Goodby, Philip."

He rose abruptly. "Good by, Alicia." The name lingered on his lips as if he hated to let it go. Then he turned and walked quickly out of the restaurant.

Alicia sat staring at the place where he had sat until she heard somebody slide into the chair beside her.

"So," the voice of Perry Stratton purred in her ear, "little Miss Prissy isn't above taking tea with the Sam English whelp. Where do you suppose that will get you? Haven't you heard what happens to pretty hello girls who play around with the idle rich? Anyway, he's already tagged."

Alicia lifted her eyes to his, then veiled them contemptuously. "Telling me the facts of life, Perry? You needn't bother. I happen to know as well as you do that he's labeled for delivery to Helene Carfax. Where do you suppose an operator keeps her ears? At home with her best step-ins?" That was the way you had to talk to Perry, the only language he knew. She got up indifferently. "I'm dying to dance," she said. "Want to take me some place?"

His black eyes smoldered in his sallow face. "Now you're talking like a wise girl. And if you listen to Uncle Perry, you'll keep away from the places young Philip is apt to be. Something's due to happen to him—and anybody else who gets in the way."

It wasn't what he said. It was the way he said it. There was a sinister undertone in his threat that terrified her.

After all, what did she know of Perry? Just that he was a smooth dancer one of the girls had brought to the apartment. Just that he had enough money, and didn't get too drunk. She didn't even know where he worked.

She forced herself to be casual. "What, for instance?" she fastened a glove button as if the last thing in the world that concerned her was what could happen to Philip English.

Perry grinned maliciously. "Remind me, next time we're alone. I might tell you, sweetheart."

Alicia felt suffocated. "I haven't time to dance after all. I've got a dash." Swiftly she left the Peacock. The black shadow of Perry's careless words spread around her, over her, like a pall. She shivered, and walked all the way to her apartment, trying to fight off the fear in her heart.

THE next day the papers shrieked the engagement of Helene Carfax, Helene of the cold blond beauty in the half-page picture, to Philip Dexter English II.

That week was one of misery for Alicia. It wasn't that Philip was going to marry Helene. She had known from the first there was no hope for herself. But there'd been a call from a pay station to a foreign-sounding man at the Commodore. The voice from the pay station promised to "blow that English bunch higher than a kite before this thing was ended." And the voice was tantalizingly familiar.

Perry's veiled threat came back to the girl at the operator's desk. When her relief period came she flew to a phone in the rest room and called the Commodore. Yes, there had been a man in 1242. Just checked out. A Señor Correga, of San Carlo. Where was San Carlo? You've got me, sister. I think it's a pint size republic down in Central America.

Señor Correga. San Carlo. They didn't mean a thing. If only Alicia could place that other voice! After her last shift she waited near the corner. She had a half date with Perry, if he could get away, he didn't say from what. The boss was cooking big things, he intimated. And that was exactly why Alicia waited for him. But she didn't see Perry, after all. A car drew up at the curb.

"Just a ship in the night. The hand wave looks familiar." He was bareheaded, with a polo coat over evening clothes.

"Philip! You do sneak up on a poor working gal!" She was weak with the thrill of seeing him. He sprang out and opened the door of the car, his ardent eyes devouring her.

"Where do you work?"

Driving away, she had an uneasy thought of Perry. He'd be angry, and she mustn't anger him again. But this she couldn't resist. Every moment with Philip was just so much saved against the dead days ahead when there would be no Philip.

"Where to?" he asked. "My—er—Miss Carfax is dining with an old aunt."

Heaven bless Helene Carfax's aunt, Alicia thought. She sat back in the seat and closed her eyes. Merely to sit there beside him, to sense his nearness, to catch the faint odor of fresh masculinity about him, of shaving cream, of good tobacco, of polished leather, to know that he was achingly near. This was enough.

But she had to say something. "Let's just drive." She was glad he didn't press his question about her work. She did not want him to know about the office, that peephole where she looked on his life unobserved.

So they just drove. Through flashing traffic, past shouting newsboys, past traffic police hustling everything movable along. The thought burned in Alicia's brain: *this much is mine.*

Philip stopped the car on the dark side of the park drive. Without a word she was in his arms, his lips were on hers, in a terrible, ecstatic embrace that hammered madness into the girl's very brain. Almost savagely he released her.

"I didn't mean to do that," he said, his breath hot on her cheek, "I despise myself."

"I don't," Alicia whispered. "I made you do it. Something electric in me, some wild current in you. Oh, Philip, this must be the last time. It's heavenly, but it's too dangerous."

"I know it," he admitted bitterly. "Why in Heaven's name couldn't I have met you—before?"

Alicia had had as much as she could bear. The ache of this delirium of feeling was actually physical. "Take me home," she muttered, "and don't see me again. Ever."

As fast as the traffic would let him, he took her home. Without a farewell she ran up to her door.

"Not so fast, sweetheart," she heard Perry Stratton's voice, acid with rage, behind her. She fought for control of herself.

"So she can't keep from sticking her pretty little fingers in the T.N.T. to see what'll happen," he jeered.

"Oh, hello, Perry," she said coolly. "I must have missed you."

"So that's how you put it," he derided.

She kept her temper with difficulty. "If that's all you're here for," she told him, "I'm not amused. I thought you wanted to go places."

Instantly Perry brightened. "That's talking. When you drove up with that bag of rocks I thought you were ritzing me."

"Hear him rave." Alicia smiled swiftly. "I want to go where I can wear my pretties and dance. I won't be a moment changing. I had my hair done this afternoon." She ran in, and Perry strutted into the lobby to wait.

In the purplish twilight of No. 33, a dubious night club, he drank his own health a number of times, mellowing rapidly in the process. On the umpteenth round he advised Alicia, sitting silent and lovely as a moon goddess in her blue satin gown, "Say, wake up. Anybody'd think you were at your own wake. I'm not so bad, you know. Art De Moro's men go places in this burg."

De Moro! That was it. The man who had talked to Señor Corrego of San Carlo. Arthur De Moro! Suddenly she leaned to Perry, all sweetness and light.

"I've been blue," she confided. "You've been acting so funny with me lately."

He beamed. "So that's it." He moved over to her side of the table and slid his arm around her shoulders. "I guess I'll never understand dames."

Alicia shuddered beneath his touch, trying desperately not to let him know. "You certainly won't, Perry. Say, did you say you were one of De Moro's boys?"

Drunk as he was, he moved instantly away from her, a sly look on his sharp face. "What do you care?" he asked suspiciously.

Think fast my girl, think fast, she told herself.

Swiftly she retorted, "I certainly do care if the man I'm with has plenty to tip the waiter, or if I'm eating his last dime in my ice cream."

He relaxed. "Don't you worry about that. You're better off if you don't know a single thing about De Moro, see?" He gulped another drink, and then laughed, muddled. "And Phil English's old man'd be better off if he knew more. What do you think of that?"

ALICIA leaned back, her brain whirling. This was maddening. Perry must be made to tell her what he knew. She mustn't rush him, but there were ways. She pointed to a tray of pinkish drinks being carried past their table. "Let's have some of those."

He darted a surprised look at her. "Okay, Doll, but they'll put you under the table." He signaled the waiter.

Put *him* under the table, Alicia hoped. But they never got the drinks. Into the half-light of No. 33 came a man and a girl, the girl a willowy blonde with a coronet of pale, shining hair about her head and the coldest pair of blue eyes that ever looked through you. She was wearing a sheathlike gown of satin that exactly matched her

burnished hair, and no ornaments but some marvelous wide sapphire bracelets and matching clips.

Icy, selfish sophistication to her very long finger tips, this girl. And though Alicia had seen her only in pictures she knew it was Helene Carfax. This clammy statue was the girl her warm-hearted Philip was too honorable to jilt.

And then she noticed the man, a common enough type in night spots—dark-sleek-haired, in impeccable evening clothes. Not so common when you looked at his eyes, black, bold, ruthless. Alicia turned quickly to Perry, who had gone a sick, greenish white.

"De Moro! I'm getting out of here. I'm supposed to be somewhere else," he muttered, fumbling for Alicia's wrap.

The girl was a little dizzy. Arthur De Moro! Half high-born Spanish, half American, all rascal. And with Helene Carfax, who was supposedly dining with an old aunt!

"Don't be silly," she said, trying to keep her voice normal. "He won't see you. Besides, he surely doesn't ride herd on all his gang—er—employes."

But there was terror in Perry's eyes. "That bird's got eyes in the back of his head, and he knows to a man where we're supposed to be."

He settled his bill shakily, and hustled her out before the De Moro party had had time to settle at a table and look about them.

She was finished with Perry. No man with that fright in his eyes would give away anything he shouldn't. But Alicia knew other ways of getting information. She passed the word down the switchboard. "Let me handle the De Moro calls." The girls grinned at her.

"Following a serial?" they wanted to know. She nodded. They often did it—followed through a drama in telephone messages, as scraps of it came over the line, just to relieve the boredom of office routine.

So she got De Moro's calls. For weeks there was nothing of much importance. Late calls from Helene Carfax, with Helene making slighting remarks about her "nursery school" dates with Philip.

Alicia hated her—this tall, silky blonde who could hold a man's promise and laugh at him behind his back. Who could flirt with a notorious adventurer like De Moro.

What did De Moro have, anyway? A penthouse, and an oily-voiced butler. A fleet of cars, and the terrified service of unnamed underlings like Perry Stratton—for some secret work. He had a sleek, high-powered yacht, the Falcon, riding at anchor in the bay. And he must have money, or he wouldn't have cold-eyed, beautiful Helene Carfax fawning upon him.

This last puzzled Alicia. For the wedding plans were under way. Parties began to swing in honor of the young couple, cocktail parties, dinner dances, hunt breakfasts. What was Helene's game?

Alicia compressed her pretty lips and stubbornly followed De Moro calls.

And suddenly they came—an avalanche of calls. An excited De Moro calling England, calling Miami, for mysterious "Joes," "Jakes," and a guarded individual who was called by no name. Nothing in any one call, but when she pieced together her "serial," the story came out.

SAM ENGLISH had mines in San Carlo—and swamps. The mines were so-so, the swamps priceless. They

covered with their ooze and slime wells of helium gas. That priceless helium gas that nations of Europe would give a king's ransom for.

San Carlo had had another revolution. Sam English had to get a new concession from the new president, Trujillo, who was coming on the presidential yacht, the Theresa, for that very purpose. His revolution had been expensive, and the Englishes would pay for it to save the money they had already sunk in San Carlo. Millions to make, or millions to lose. And the secretary of Trujillo was named Corrego, the man of the Commodore, who had called Arthur De Moro so long ago.

Alicia felt suffocated. This was the game Helene Carfax was playing from both ends, and the stake was the San Carlo helium wells. If she could only warn Philip! Warn him of what? That a love-lorn hello girl had poked her nose into his affairs and was seeing things?

Maddeningly, there was nothing to tell—yet. She grew thin from worry, her eyes great blue wells of fear in the white face below the widow's peak of dark hair.

Anyway, Phil was in Palm Beach. Not with Helene, who had stayed behind, supposedly to do her trousseau shopping. He was there but Sam English, his father, was in New York.

Just after she came on shift at two o'clock one lush day in May, one of the girls passed a ticket to her.

"A dame calling on your serial," she whispered. Alicia's heart beat hard as she rang De Moro's penthouse. For Helene was the dame.

"Arthur!" The voice was low and urgent. "You've been watching the wrong man. Sam English isn't going out to Trujillo's yacht to sign that paper. He's in the hospital."

There was a sharp intake of breath. "For God's sake, Helene, who is?"

Alicia's heart almost stopped beating. It had come—this thing she had waited for. The supervisor passed behind her.

"Isn't that call under way?" she asked sharply. Alicia nodded.

"Then close your listening key."

Numbly the girl obeyed, and pretended to start another call. Would the woman never move on? The instant she did, Alicia slid the key open. Thank Heaven, they were still talking. She heard:

"He called on his way through from Miami. He's on his way to Port Quest now. He'll take a hired motorboat out to the Theresa." Helene's voice. It must be Philip she meant. He was going to Trujillo's yacht, in his father's place.

De Moro's snarl answered, "All the better. Now we know where both of them are. We'll grab the young one on the way out. You be at the dock in half an hour and I'll pick you up in my launch."

Alicia pressed the headphones against her throbbing ears. Treacherous Helene Carfax was going to Trujillo's yacht with a forged order from Phil to transfer the English holdings to *her* as the future Mrs. Philip English.

Trujillo would do this without question for the beautiful Helene. Everybody knew she was to marry Philip. And Philip would not prevent it for the simple reason that he would be a prisoner on De Moro's yacht, kidnaped from his motorboat. And when he got away it would be too late.

If Philip got away! That was the question De Moro left open. They wouldn't dare harm him! Yes, they would dare. Strange and awful things can happen to a man and be made to

look natural and legal—if you have money.

Alicia tried to steady her shaking hands. She must think of a way to warn Philip. That Helene had sold him out? Hardly, Helene had her tracks well covered. When she had the Trujillo signature in her hands she could play either side that suited her. But Philip must not be left at her mercy.

"What's the matter, Miss Gray? You're dropping tickets all over the board." The sharp voice of Kate Lane was at her back. Alicia didn't need a second hint.

"I—I feel sick," she stammered.

The supervisor took a look at her strained, white face and summoned a relief operator. Alicia unplugged her headset from the board and walked unsteadily out. What luck! What colossal luck!

Luck! She needed it. It was luck that she had the use of her roommate's car. Pure luck that she had not yet spent her last week's pay. It was there in her purse—four crisp bills. In her gray polo coat and red beret she went around to the garage, got the little car, and steered it safely through the easy three o'clock traffic to the open North Highway.

It was a gorgeous day, with the woods still that warm, green-gold color of spring, the sky and distant Sound a soft baby blue. Port Quest! She'd never heard of it, but it must be out here somewhere. Five miles more, flying over the road. She hoped there was plenty of gas in the car. Ah, there it was, that little fingerpost to the right. Port Quest.

Alicia drove into the narrow road. It was old, not paved. She slowed down and looked at the tracks ahead of her. Fresh ones, and plenty of them. Philip's perhaps.

She sent the little car crazily over the bumps. Out on the Bay, its white outline picked out by the late sun, was a yacht. The Theresa! Her heart pounded as at the finish of a grueling race.

She bumped the little car to a stop near the long, rotting pier. Port Quest might have been a port once, but now it was only a row of weather-beaten shacks straggling along the waterfront, with a dozen dilapidated fishing boats rising and falling on the swell of tide.

It was quiet as death, quiet as Sunday at the toll board. Maybe it was the wrong place. There wasn't a moving thing on the water, not a sign that Philip had been there. She was about to turn the car around and head south again when she saw the long blue open car that Philip drove, parked beneath a shed.

Swiftly she ran her own car into the same shed, locked it and ran down the pier. An old fellow slouched in a very new-looking motorboat. Alicia didn't like his looks, but there was no choice. He was the only one there.

"How much to take me to that yacht?" she panted, pointing a slim finger at the white vessel.

The man didn't look up. His hat was pulled over his face and a week's growth of dark beard hid his jaws. He held up one hand, flapped the five fingers shut. Five dollars. It was a hold-up, but there she was. She put a bill into the long fingers and climbed into the boat.

"Hurry!" she urged. "I've got to get to that yacht. It's terribly important." The sun was a golden ball on the western hills. There wouldn't be much time before dark.

The powerful motor purred; the boat shot into the water and headed outward. Alicia sat tensely and eyed the

slouchy figure of the boatman. Something about him was vaguely familiar. The shape of that long jaw? She couldn't be sure, for the red of the setting sun dazzled her.

Then he turned his head fleetingly, and for one horrid moment she thought that she would faint. Underneath those shapeless clothes was Perry Stratton.

SHE didn't make a sound. Some wary caution born of instinct held her rigid, silent. He mustn't know she had recognized him. But it came to her that they were not heading for the Theresa. They had veered about and were speeding for the other shore.

Alicia knew with a sureness that sent her icy heart into the pit of her stomach that eventually they would reach the De Moro yacht, the Falcon, where even now Philip was a prisoner. And then there would be a nameless girl, face down on the water, to drift into land in a few days.

Her terrified mind saw the pattern more clearly. Perry had been left at the pier to pick up any inquisitive person who happened along at the wrong time. They had outwitted the whole English crowd—the ones in and the ones like herself, who tried to help from the outside. They had them all neatly trussed up and stowed away, like so many plucked chickens ready for market. *Or had they?*

Anger at the outrage rose in Alicia's heart, washing away her feeling of helplessness. She looked warily about her. On the floor of the boat was a heavy wrench. Her movements quite drowned by the roar of the motor and dash of spray, she crouched forward, lifted the wrench in both hands and brought it down on Perry's head. She hoped it wouldn't kill him, but she had to do it.

He chanced to turn just as she struck. She saw the flash of malignant hatred on his face, and waited, frozen, until he fell over backward.

The boat swerved crazily and slowed. Desperately she crawled over the inert body of her victim and seized the wheel. It steered much like a car, and she got control of the thing readily enough.

Hoping against hope that Perry would stay out, she raced the boat toward the yacht. It wasn't far now. She could see the figures of men passing along the deck. The open portholes. A white awning over the stern of the big boat sheltered several white-clad people looking into the glow in the west.

And then she heard Perry stirring behind her. That hate she had seen on his face! Dear Heaven, help her to reach that yacht! To be near enough for help!

Like an evil octopus his arms closed on hers. "You little devil! Thought you'd got me, huh?" His breath was hot on her neck, his hateful face touching her cheek.

Her fright-frozen hands released the wheel. The boat careened and threw them both off balance. It gave the girl her chance. With a terrific effort she wrenched herself free of the coat that Perry clung to and hurled herself over the side of the boat.

Furiously she swam, with all the rasping breath she could get through her lungs. She heard shouting from the decks of the yacht. Thank God, they'd seen her. They'd send help.

A great, searing pain tore at the arm she had upraised for the next stroke. She heard the shouts grow fainter, the red pain of her arm scorching, salt water wash over her face and suck her down, down.

How she was taken from the water, how she reached the deck of the Theresa she did not know. But reach it she did, to hear voices murmur in shocked tones, "He shot her, the villain, as she raised her arm. Shot the girl—and she's so lovely, so chic."

Olive-skinned men bent over her. One, from the extra amount of stiff gold braid on his white uniform, she took to be Señor Trujillo himself. She motioned him closer with a supreme effort.

"Philip English—kidnaped in the Falcon. Don't sign for the woman—Miss Carfax. It's a trick," she managed to whisper. Then she let herself fall into the black velvet darkness that beckoned so insistently.

ALICIA was awake. She lay in the luxurious wide bed of the state cabin of the Theresa and stared at the fat pink cupids on the gilt ceiling, unwilling to think, even to feel.

The wound of Perry Stratton's bullet was an interesting white bandage now, an excuse for her to stay here, inert, an invalid to be fussed over by the starched white nurse who had been brought from the mainland.

She had the story now, from the nurse, from the flattering San Carlans who came in to bow stiffly, to kiss her hand, to assure her that she was the bravest, the most lovely, quite the wisest young lady in the world. That but for her Meestaire Philip English would doubtless still be the prisoner of that scoundrel De Moro, whereas now he was safe, Heaven be praised. And as for the helium business, it was quite settled. Also, Heaven and Miss Gray be praised.

No, these things did not trouble her. But of Helene Carfax she heard not a word. An ominous silence surrounded that young lady that could mean but one thing.

She had played her cards so well that when De Moro was caught Helene had simply faded. Got out, and gone discreetly back to Southampton to be properly shocked at the whole story, when Philip got around to telling her. She was the one person who could eat her cake and have it, too. There were no burned bridges behind Helene. She would marry the man who controlled that fabulous wealth of helium.

The world was a screwy place. Alicia tried to put all thought of Helene, of Philip, of the whole intriguing, conniving, hothouse, money-mad crowd out of her mind. She'd get up, dress, and demand to be taken back to her switchboard, where she could sink back into obscurity again.

Alicia the telephone girl, who lived in a bandbox apartment, who paid $2.98 for her hats, and who cared, anyway?

She put one foot on the thick blue rug, then pulled it hastily back into bed and drew the blue satin cover up to her chin.

There were footsteps outside her door. Steps—there was only one person in the world who walked like that. In an agony of embarrassment Alicia felt herself blushing. Furiously she tried to be calm. He was merely coming to thank her, and she had to blush all over the place.

"Darling!" He was in; he was there; he had her in his arms. Their two hearts beat together in one marvelous, heavenly pulse.

He told her: "They wouldn't let me come before. Said you had shock. I can't believe it. I don't think a heart as brave as yours could ever be afraid enough to be shocked."

For an instant she let him hold her.

Then she pushed him away. "Helene. You mustn't forget her," she murmured. Twisting her own heart, just to see how much it would hurt.

Philip's jaw squared. "Helene! No, I'm not likely to forget her, darling. Nor she me, I should think. When she knew—too late—that I, all trussed up, saw her rush up and kiss that snake De Moro! I just wish you could have seen her face. I can't think how I let myself be so taken in. It's all a bad dream now. And where do you think we're going on our honeymoon, Mrs. Philip English?"

Alicia clung to him tightly. She had to, or lose her balance completely in this dizzy world. "I couldn't possibly guess," she said weakly. "I'm not good at games."

Philip laid his cheek against the satin-black of her hair. "To San Carlo, angel, on this very boat. The license, the minister, and the trousseau will be here any minute now. How's that for speed?"

And the only answer Alicia could make was to snuggle more deeply into the shelter of his arms. This screwy, dizzy, marvelous world!

In the next issue:

The Devil Takes a Wife

By HENRIETTA WINKLER

MR. WRIGHT FOUND OUT HE WAS WRONG!
MR. WRIGHT: Gee, this stuff is awful! Why do all laxatives taste so bad?
MRS. WRIGHT: All of them don't. Ex-Lax tastes like delicious chocolate.
MR. W.: Ex-Lax? That's O.K. for you and Junior, but I need something stronger!
MRS. W.: No, you don't! Ex-Lax is just as effective as any bad-tasting cathartic.
LATER
MR. W.: I sure am glad I took your advice. It's Ex-Lax for me from now on.
MRS. W.: Yes, with Ex-Lax in the house we don't need any other laxative!
The action of Ex-Lax is thorough, yet *gentle!* No shock. No strain. No weakening after-effects. Just an easy, comfortable bowel movement that brings blessed relief. Try Ex-Lax the next time you need a laxative. It's good for *every* member of the family.
10¢ and 25¢
EX-LAX
THE CHOCOLATED LAXATIVE

As Told
To
OUISE VAUPEL

"I always loved you, and you loved me—all you could"

Canalboat Kitty

CONCLUSION:

WHO can explain these things? The frightening words we speak when our souls are torn, as if someone else—that someone who dreams within us—speaks?

My child was dead, I told her father. When Steve asked about Stephanie I hadn't the slightest intention of telling him that lie. Yet now the words were said, I couldn't seem to deny them.

Maybe if Steve had showed any sorrow, any real regret, I might have weakened. But he just looked at me a moment, then poured out a drink.

"Too bad, Irish. For you, I mean. I guess I'm not the domestic type of man. I never wanted a kid, anyway. I only wanted you. And I was jealous of it. I'm that way."

Yes, Steve was that way. Hadn't I seen the jealousy in his eyes when he spoke to Jimmy?

Long after Steve went to sleep that night I kept thinking of the waif I had befriended. Jimmy's starved childhood. His heart, that had been filled with love for us all. "I got folks now," he once said proudly. "You and Birdie. When a fellow has folks it makes things right, don't it?"

And now he was to be turned adrift again if Steve had his way. At fifteen, when he needed guidance most.

Vague plans I'd had for Jimmy paraded through my mind as I prepared Steve's breakfast next morning.

"I see the kid showed up again," he said as he sat down at the table.

I went on frying bacon. "He's been a great help to me, Steve. Jimmy's a good kid, hard working. I wouldn't have been able to carry on without him after Birdie passed on."

He didn't say anything for a moment. Then: "Say, I'm pretty tough, I guess. That jail didn't make me any softer. But—the kid can stay until I get my sea legs back, if it's any comfort to you."

"Just for that you get hot biscuits," I told him, my heart light again.

"Boy!" He grinned like a kid. "Sink that butter deep, Old Lady. I've been saving my appetite five years for these."

His dark eyes gleamed happily as I set the delicately browned biscuits before him. "Irish, everything is so good. Everything is just the same as when I left—isn't it?"

I nodded. I couldn't tell him it wasn't. That I wasn't just *his* now. That I was part mother, too.

Suddenly, as I went to take his cup to refill it, he swung me around until I was leaning against the crook of his arm, crushed hard against him. The excitement that was in him swept over me, too. Tingling, as that old look of triumph came into his face.

"My woman!" he whispered. Then he let me go. I stood there, breathless for a moment.

"Mind if I go sightseeing?" he asked. "I want to walk and walk and talk to people—lots of 'em. To see the sun at noon. I want to go to the Battery and watch the boats come in. I want to go to the Aquarium." He threw back his head and laughed. "There's a fish in there that looks just like one of the screws up the river. I want to make faces at him."

I laughed with him. "Sure, go ahead, Steve. And I'll cook you the finest dinner you ever had. Chicken and rice—not the gooey kind but every kernel separate—and apple pie with cheese. But see that you're back on time! Six is the dead line."

"What's going to stop me?" he asked.

A hundred things, I thought. But aloud I said: "Get along with you. There's plenty to be done this day."

I watched him go down the dock, and it was as if he'd never been away. His head was high again. There was a spring in his step. The pagan was free once more.

After he disappeared I called Jimmy for breakfast. The boy ate in silence. I suddenly remembered I'd forgotten to give him any money last night.

"Where did you sleep, Jimmy?" I asked.

He grinned up at me. "I dug a hole in the sand, behind the deckhouse. It wasn't bad at all."

I put my hand on his shoulder. "Sorry, Jimmy, I forgot all about your not having any money. I guess seeing Steve sort of floored me."

"I know." He put down his fork. "Look, Kitty, I understand about Steve. It's all right."

"You understand a lot of things, Jimmy."

"He's a swell-looking guy, all right. Gee, if I was only good-looking like that!"

"You'll do."

"Kitty, Steve's nuts about you. And he ought to be, the way you've stood by and kept things going." He gulped hard. "You're a—swell egg to do what you've done for a scrubby kid like me. It sure is—swell."

"You're still a kid," I told him, going to turn the light off under the coffee. "I know how you feel, because you're like my own son. And if I couldn't go on loving my two kids, just because Steve's back, I wouldn't be much of a woman."

Tears came to his eyes, but I made believe I didn't see them. He wouldn't have liked me to notice.

I came and sat opposite him at the table. "Jimmy, in a way you're the only one I can talk to, now that Birdie's gone. You understand, and Heaven knows there's plenty to understand. Listen to this."

When I finished telling him how I'd lied to Steve about Stephanie, his blue eyes were like marbles. "Gosh, Kitty, how did you happen to do a thing like that?"

"I don't know, but I'm not sorry for it. I'm all mixed up in a way, but not about that." I leaned over the table. "Listen, Jimmy, you're to stay on until I see how things work out. I know Steve's jealous of you, but I'm not going to let you drift. You'll stay until I see things clear ahead."

"Sure I'll stay, Kitty. As long as you want me to. Nobody could drive me away from you until you tell me to get out."

I dug down in my purse. "Here's some money for you, just in case. You'll have to sleep out until we go up the Sound for another load. I don't think we'll start for a few days yet. Steve has a lot of things to get out of his system."

I guess he was busy at it, too, for it was eight when Jimmy and I sat down to eat the chicken and apple pie, alone. I cleaned up and twelve o'clock had struck, and still he hadn't come home.

"What's going to keep me?" Steve had said. A fight, maybe. My heart turned cold as I saw again that limp, sprawling figure on the floor. The man Steve had killed.

At three o'clock I decided to go to bed. I was tired in every bone and my heart ached with worry. There was only one thing to be glad for. Stephanie wasn't there. She was lying far away, in a lovely little bed with painted flowers on it; so safe, so sheltered.

Steve came in at dawn, shouting and singing bawdy songs, his eyes wild with excitement. "Irish, darling, I'm drunk! Don't scold me. Snide and me went on a binge. But I'm going to start behaving next week."

I helped him to bed. And as he lay there, helpless, his dark hair damp, deep circles under his eyes, I understood. It was his way of making life bearable. He hadn't anything else.

Not the way I had. No dreams to make him forget reality. No love big enough to make him lose himself in it. The way God meant it to be.

All the next day while Steve's nerves were on trigger edge, he rode Jimmy until I thought I'd go mad. I stood it the next day, too. Then I decided things had gone far enough. I told Steve to lay off Jimmy, or else.

For a moment I thought he'd hit me. Then his eyes softened. "Just as sassy as ever, ain't you, Irish? Look, what's this kid to you?"

"Nothing," I lied.

"Then how's about?" He thumbed toward the door.

My lips closed tight. I didn't answer him. There didn't seem to be anything for me to say.

But Jimmy said it for me, after lunch when Steve went out to find Snide. "I'm getting out, Kitty. I'm a pain in the neck to Steve. And you don't need me now. He's got first call on you, after all."

Had he? Well, those kids had rights, too. I thought for a moment of walking out on Steve. And then I knew I was on the wrong track. No matter where I went he'd come after me. He'd kill me before he'd let me go.

And I had to keep on working the barge if I wanted to support my kids, didn't I? And give them an education.

Besides, I couldn't leave Steve now. Not while he was down. I had to stand by him.

But there was one thing I could do!

"Get on your best suit, Jimmy," I said suddenly. "And make it snappy. We're going downtown."

AS I went to the door, I saw Birdie's hat hanging there. That old captain's hat was like a symbol. She wasn't afraid of anything, Birdie wasn't. I put the hat on, and somehow I felt as if it would help me go through with my plans.

Jimmy didn't say anything as we rode downtown in the subway. He looked kind of scared at my grim, unsmiling face.

"Are you feeling all right, Kitty?" he asked me.

Feeling all right! I was dying inside. But I snapped, "Sure. Never better in all my lousy life."

The blonde at the desk, with the red painted fingernails, looked at me kind of funny. No wonder, I thought, seeing us through her eyes. A blue-suited woman with a captain's hat on her head, and a red-headed boy, who towered awkwardly over her. Not the kind that usually came to the correct Hammond offices.

"I'm sorry, but Mr. Hammond is in conference," the blonde informed me.

"Never mind that line," I snapped, as if I'd been giving orders to a tug's crew. "Tell him Kitty Egan's got to see him—pronto!"

She hesitated, then went to the door with his name on it. In a minute Mr. Hammond came out. "Kitty, what is it?" He looked panic-stricken.

"I want to talk to you."

"Come into my office." He turned to the blonde. "Don't let anyone disturb us."

As the door closed behind us, he began at once: "You promised to leave Stephanie with us for three weeks at least. Oh, Kitty, Caroline is getting along so well, and the baby is so happy with us. Please don't take her away."

He sure was in a dither. "I didn't come to take Stephanie," I said quickly. "I came to ask for help."

He heaved a sigh of relief and pulled out a chair for me. "The way I feel about you, Kitty Egan, you can have anything I've got."

I cleared my throat. "No use beating about the bush. It's about Jimmy, here."

He looked at the boy. "I can't get over the way you've grown, Jimmy. Kitty's done a good job on you. She's got two wonderful children."

"I *did* have," I broke in.

Jimmy stared at me, the grin wiped off his face.

"What do you mean—*did* have, Kitty?" Mr. Hammond asked.

The tears burned behind my eyes, but my voice never wavered. "I want you to keep Stephanie. Adopt her as your own."

A radiance came to his face. "Caroline will be beside herself with joy!"

"But there are conditions," I went on. And then stopped. It isn't easy to give your heart away.

Mr. Hammond said gently, "Tell me, Kitty. I know it's hard—whatever will make you give Stephanie up."

"I told my husband, when he came out of jail a couple of nights ago, that the baby had died." My voice sharpened. "What my reason was is *my* business. Nobody else's. It's good enough for me."

"I understand, Kitty. You wouldn't do anything without a good reason. What are the conditions?"

"That when you adopt Stephanie, you promise never to tell who she is."

"Isn't that pretty hard on you?"

"Leave me out of this," I returned. "I don't have to tell you that I know you'll love her."

"We'll do everything for her; treat her just like our own child, Kitty." Mr. Hammond's eyes were true. He spoke from his heart.

Jimmy blurted out, "Kitty, you can't do this! You can't do it."

I went on steadily, "I have a thousand dollars saved, Mr. Hammond. I want you to take that for the boy. If you want Stephanie, you'll have to take Jimmy, too. I don't mean adopt him, but help him get his education, so he can go places."

Jimmy came over to me. "I won't let you do it, Kitty."

I pushed his hand off my arm and got up. I shoved Birdie's hat back on my head. "I want him to be a lawyer," I said, "like you. I'll send you money for him, as I get my hands on it. But he must have a chance, too."

Mr. Hammond hesitated a moment.

"You can't have one without the other," I told him.

"All right, Kitty," he agreed. "I'll take Jim under my wing. And I'll take that thousand from you because I know how you feel. How independent you are. I'll make a good lawyer out of him, I promise you." His voice broke. "And I want to add—I think you're just about the bravest woman I ever knew."

Me, brave? When it was all I could do to stand there, giving my children to him, without bawling? I put my hand to my throat to ease the aching. My face felt queer and jerky in places. I went to the window and looked out so they wouldn't see how I felt.

The city lay far below, with the river stretching beyond like a silver ribbon. I could hear the hum of the street noises, like life itself whispering down there. Then it all faded from me, and I was again in Caroline Hammond's cool white house, feeling the love that dwelt there, the peace. All that I'd dreamed for myself, my two children should have.

We *do* get what we want, I thought. But not always the way we ask for it. Some of the peace that Caroline knew came into my heart then.

I turned and went toward the silent two, who stood waiting for me. I smiled, and Jimmy smiled back, although his lips were trembling.

"Okay, Kid?" I asked as I held out my hand.

"Okay, Kitty," he returned, and gripped my hand until it hurt.

I opened my bag and gave Mr. Hammond the draft I'd drawn on my savings account in Sands Point. "That closes the account," I told him, as I laid it on his desk.

He couldn't seem to speak. But in the silence our hearts spoke of love beyond self and friendship that would last to all eternity.

THAT night I told Steve Jimmy had run away.

"I told you that kid was a washout,"

he commented. But I noticed he seemed happier. "I tell you what, Irish. Let's get going in the morning. What say?"

Anywhere, I thought. What's the difference? When your heart is empty the place doesn't matter.

Funny, the way I got to feeling as time went on. As if I led two lives. One with Steve on the barge, and the other with the kids, in dreams.

I wasn't mixed up a bit, now. It was all as clear to me as crystal. I knew Steve, and I knew myself. I understood how love can hurt when it's selfish. And that the love I had for the kids mustn't ever be confused with the love I had for my man.

That was the only way to beat the game. The only way to keep from being wrecked, the way Birdie had been. Keep the two separate.

I didn't see my baby again. I explained how I felt to Caroline, when we met in the Hammond office to attend to the details of adoption.

"If Stephanie is to grow up thinking she belongs to you she's got to forget me, hasn't she? She mustn't be torn between us. She's little now. In a few months she'll forget all about me, about living any other way. And then there's Steve." I looked away from Caroline's tear-filled eyes. "If he ever caught me visiting you, or saw me with her, he'd know. You've got to go the whole way, when you start a thing."

They saw that. Even Jimmy.

"But you're going to see me, Kitty," he said. "I can tell you all about Stephanie. You'll see."

I went to the boy and put my hands on his shoulders. "You're not to write a line about her, ever. Steve might get the letters."

"I won't write about her. But I'll get word to you, somehow."

"Kitty can meet you here, any time," they told me.

"No," I said firmly. "From now on, you and I must be strangers. While Steve lives it's Stephanie's only protection. But Jimmy and I will find a way." I kissed the boy again. "You're to study hard; you're not to let me down," I told him.

"I won't, Kitty." His eyes were like those of an eager puppy. "Never, so help me!"

He never did. He was worth all my hopes for him, always. And we managed to see each other at times. The eager boy, who grew quickly to manhood, and the tired woman who lived for those moments.

Feasts that filled my heart, those meetings were. Milestones, I guess you'd call them.

"Stephanie is growing like a weed, Kitty! And Caroline worships her. I'm teaching her how to swim now. She's like you—crazy about the water."

"Tell me, Jimmy. Don't leave out the least little thing."

I kept saying that as the years went by, while Stephanie grew to forget me; forget everything but the life she now led.

I used to pore over the pictures Jimmy brought me. Snapshots he took, and which I studied until I knew them by heart. The story of Stephanie's life unfolding. The ungainly age, that brought smiles to my lips. The odd little grown-up air that began finally to peer out of the pictures. It was like living all over again; living a wonderful new life in my child.

"Take them with you, Kitty," Jimmy urged.

"No. Heavens, doesn't she look more like me every day?"

The grave eyes studied me. "Kitty, I know it isn't in you to leave Steve, but couldn't you get him to settle down somewhere? You look so tired."

Maybe I was tired. The way women

get who wait. For that's what my life with Steve seemed to be. Waiting for him to come home when he was out on a binge. Waiting for him to grow up, I guess. To get over being a bad boy.

Why, Jimmy was a man already. The day he told me he was going away to college it came over me like a flash. He called himself Hammond now. After the man who had learned to love him like his own son.

Jimmy's voice was deep now. Checking off the years for us. "Kitty, I'm twenty-two . . . I'm twenty-four today . . . I was admitted to the bar yesterday."

And then the day of days when I met him at the library on Fifth Avenue, and we almost danced in the street with joy.

"Kitty, hold your hat! I'm a member of the firm of Hammond and Hammond. I'm really one of them!"

I was seeing the red-headed waif again. My heart was so full I couldn't speak.

"Kitty, darling, why don't you sell the barge and begin to live right? I'm making money now. I'd like to take care of you. I need you, Kitty."

I put my finger on his lips. "Jimmy, you have your own life to live. Steve is the one who is needing me. He'll always need me. Besides I've always lived on the barge. I don't believe I could live in one of those stuffy flats. I'm used to the open."

When I got back to the barge I took out Birdie's old hat. I'd got into the habit of doing that. Talking to it when life got too much for me. As if my old friend somehow lingered there.

"I'm so happy, Birdie," I whispered. "So thankful you set me right about my two loves."

Steve found me there. "What the devil are you doing huddled in here?" he asked. "Sitting in the dark, holding on to Birdie's old hat? For the love of Pete, Kitty, are you going nuts?"

I laughed. "I'm thinking of getting myself a hat like hers," I told him. "It always made Birdie look kind of important."

Steve slapped his knee. "Irish, you're a case! Birdie only wore that hat so she wouldn't have to comb her hair."

"That's all you know about it," I retorted, putting it on.

"I always said you'd get like the rest of the dames on barges," he jeered. "Sloppy. This is the start, I guess."

"Well, why not?" I came back. "I live like one. I sit in the rocker, the way Pop did and Birdie did, waiting to go some place, then waiting to come back. Waiting for you. I don't know much else." I pushed the hat back on my head, the way Birdie used to. "A barge woman. That's just what I am, Steve Egan."

"And what's wrong with it?" he came back. "It's a living for us. I'm sticking to you, ain't I? Loving you—and you liking it." He seized me in his rough, hard embrace.

My arms closed around him, as always. "You could have roamed the world, but you stayed. You could have had other women, but you were true to me. You are even true to yourself, Steve. You never pretended for a minute to be anything you weren't."

He kissed me, and then took Birdie's hat and spun it in a corner. "Kitty, don't you try to be what you're not, either. You're my old lady, and you're staying that way."

Outside, maybe. But sometimes I wondered what Steve would say if he could peer into my mind.

AND so life ground on for Steve and me. We coarsened, the way people who live like us do. Grew rough,

more thoughtless, I guess. The soft bloom of youth left me, and the lines deepened in my face; etched by the wind and the spray. Steve grew heavier, his laugh louder, and he became careless about his clothes.

And because the companies were beginning to buy and operate their own barges, there wasn't so much hauling for the free lance owners as before. That meant we didn't have as much money. And Steve was never one to save. He lived for the day, as always.

That's the way it stood when Stephanie's engagement was announced. I saw it first in the paper. I was sitting in the old chair outside in the sun, when her face smiled out at me from the society page. "Stephanie Hammond and Her Fiancé." A clean-cut looking chap in flannels, looking at her the way Mr. Hammond looked at Caroline.

Just another news item, but to me it meant fulfillment of all my dreams. "I must go to the wedding," I thought.

"I'll just sit in the back of the church, Jimmy," I told him over the phone, "so that I can see her face. I want to see Stephanie married. It's the one moment I've lived all my life for."

"You bet you're coming to the wedding," he returned gaily. "And say, I'm going to buy you a new dress and hat."

"All right, Jimmy. I'll let you, this time." I hesitated, then added, "Could it be a blue one? And sort of fluffy?"

"We'll go shopping before the wedding."

We did. I was so proud of Jimmy that day. He had an air; you just knew he was important, looking at him. He wasn't handsome, but when his wide mouth smiled it warmed your very heart.

He was like a kid buying a new toy, as he told the salesgirl what we wanted. "It's her first real party dress," he finished.

"Oh, Jimmy," I laughed. "It is not."

As I fingered the blue chiffon with its soft lace, a strange feeling came over me. I looked up at the salesgirl. "It's beautiful," I told her. "But somehow I have a feeling I'm not going to wear that dress."

She didn't understand, but she thought she did. "It isn't your type, madam. Something darker, more practical, might be better. Something you can wear more than once."

"Put it in a box," Jimmy said briskly. "She's to have that dress. What difference does it make if she wears it only once? This time she's going to have what she wants."

No, it wasn't my kind of dress. As I tried it on that night I could see that. And yet it made me happy, too. It stood for something in my mind. Touching the soft folds reminded me of the day it was meant for.

Stephanie's wedding day!

It began like all other days in June. But to me it was as if the sun came out brighter, just for my girl. I hummed a little song as I got breakfast.

"You sound as if somebody'd given you a present," Steve said, smiling at me.

"A perfect June day," I returned, "is no present to be sneezed at."

Then I remembered: he was her father. I stared at him. All the years of our lives together flashed between us. And suddenly I realized how we had lived hidden from each other. Never really meeting. It was as if a stranger stood there before me. A stranger with bold dark eyes.

"I'm going out with Snide," Steve said abruptly.

I sighed with relief. "Will you be long?" I asked.

"Maybe. We've got some—business."

"We could go to Carport for a load of sand tomorrow," I reminded him, "if you get back early."

He turned at the door. I'd seen that look in his eyes so many times. "I'll be back when I'm ready to come back."

He came over to me. His eyes changed as he looked down into mine. "You're looking kind of pretty today, Irish. Sort of happy," he said, as he stooped to kiss me.

Sort of happy! I was the happiest woman in the world. Wasn't I to be at St. Thomas's church at noon, to see my fondest dream come true?

I dressed slowly that morning. The blue chiffon looked out of place in the barge, but it wouldn't in the church. Not among the others, so gay in their festive summer clothes. I ran a comb through my hair and put on the blue hat Jimmy'd sent me. White gloves covered my rough hands.

"In a minute I'll go out and get a taxi, and soon I'll be seeing Stephanie coming down the aisle. I'll be seeing her for the first time since the day I gave her up," I thought. "I'll fill my eyes and heart with her, and that will satisfy me for always."

Then it happened!

I heard the police whistle, and I ran to the door of the barge. As I stepped out on deck, I heard shouting, the patter of running feet. And then—the shots.

A scream broke from my throat as I saw Steve coming down the dock. As the first bullet hit him he swung halfway around. When the second one hit I felt it in my own heart.

I leaped the rail, went toward Steve and caught him as he fell to his knees. His arms reached for me, clung around my waist. I held his head against my breast and waited.

Always waiting and now it had come. The thing I'd dreaded for so long.

THE detective, still holding his smoking revolver, was saying, "After I arrested him he tried to get away. I had to do my duty."

Steve was trying to say something, too. I leaned over and put my ear close to his lips. "I couldn't let them cage me up again, could I? I got into a jam and I knew I'd—get the works this time."

"Hush, Steve," I whispered.

"Listen, Irish, I gotta tell you. Don't let me down. Just hold me like this a minute more." His eyes closed. When he opened them again they were dull and glazed. "Gee, you're pretty, Irish—all dressed up like that. You're sure a sweet dish for any man's money. I thought so from the minute I laid eyes on you. I always loved you, Irish. And you loved me—all you could."

His body was a dead weight now. The detective took him from my arms and laid him on the dock. He didn't have to tell me Steve was gone.

"He sure had nerve, breaking away from me like that," the detective muttered as he covered Steve's face. "He wasn't afraid of death."

Telling me. "He wasn't afraid of death—or of life, either," I told the man. And then I went slowly back to the barge.

I sat down in Pop's old chair, feeling numb all over. As I looked down at the red stain on the front of my new dress, I heard the cars come sirening up the dock. I'd go to him later when they got through with their examinations. Entered his record in their books, and closed it. Case finished.

The reporters came. They buzzed around me like flies, asking questions.

"I don't know anything. You'll have

to ask the police," I answered. "All I know is he's dead. What difference does the rest make, now?"

They took my picture with the red streak on my dress. "Human interest story," the reporter said eagerly. "Escaped prisoner dies in wife's arms. Look, Mrs. Egan, where are the kids?"

The guests would be arriving at the church now. Jimmy would be there, waiting with the groom. And Caroline. Then Mr. Hammond would arrive, with a slim, white-veiled figure hanging on his arm.

Nothing could hurt my girl, I thought. None of this tragedy could touch Stephanie's name or cloud her dear heart.

She'd be walking up the aisle now. Jimmy's blue eyes would be searching for mine. But I wouldn't be there. This was my wedding present to my girl—my final gift to her.

"Did you have any kids, Mrs. Egan?" the reporter asked again.

I came out of my dream to stare at the impudent face close to mine. What right had he to stand there on my barge, asking me questions?

I got up and my head went high. "Boys, I'll thank you to get off my boat!" I snapped. "I'm no human interest story. I'm just a barge woman, and my man's been shot because he didn't want to go to jail. There's nothing pretty about it. Nothing to get excited about. Just an incident on the waterfront."

Then I went inside and slammed the door shut behind me.

They printed it, all right. My picture, in the blue dress Jimmy bought me. Sitting in Pop's old chair, all dressed up like a woman going to a wedding!

Funny, wasn't it? Fate's little joke.

When Jimmy came to me that evening I had on my slacks. Birdie's hat was perched on top of my head. Jimmy was still dressed in his morning suit. His red hair was ruffled until it stood up around his face like an avenging flame. He had a newspaper in his hand.

"When I didn't see you at the wedding, Kitty, I was scared stiff. I knew nothing could keep you away from the wedding except—"

I interrupted. "Jimmy, how did she look? Was she happy?"

He nodded. "When I saw the evening papers, I knew. It was like you to stay away, Kitty, but it must have been awful."

"No, Jimmy, it wasn't," I said quietly. "It was kind of natural."

"I don't understand."

"I didn't either, until now," I told him. "But in some strange way life gives us our dreams. First I wanted all the things Stephanie has today. Then I wanted them for *her*. Today she has all I prayed for her to have.

"And Jimmy, Steve has what he always wanted, too. To go out quick. Never to grow old. He wasn't made for creaking old chairs and sitting in the sun."

Jimmy didn't say anything. Just reached into his pocket and brought out a white rose and a box tied with satin ribbon. "I thought you'd like to have these," he said, and went outside.

That was Jimmy for you. Always knowing the right thing to do.

After I buried Steve I sold the barge. I was so tired of the struggle. I wanted to stay in one place now. Live in a house and have a garden.

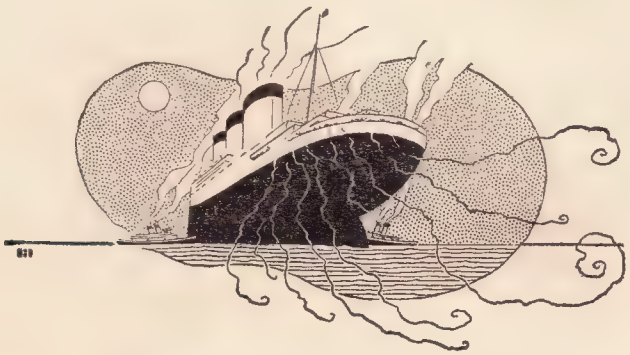
Jimmy insisted upon buying the tiny house I had found at the shore and fallen in love with. "It's just paying back a little something on the investment you made in me years ago," he said, his eyes shining with pride. "Gee! Imagine that scrubby kid you took in being—me."

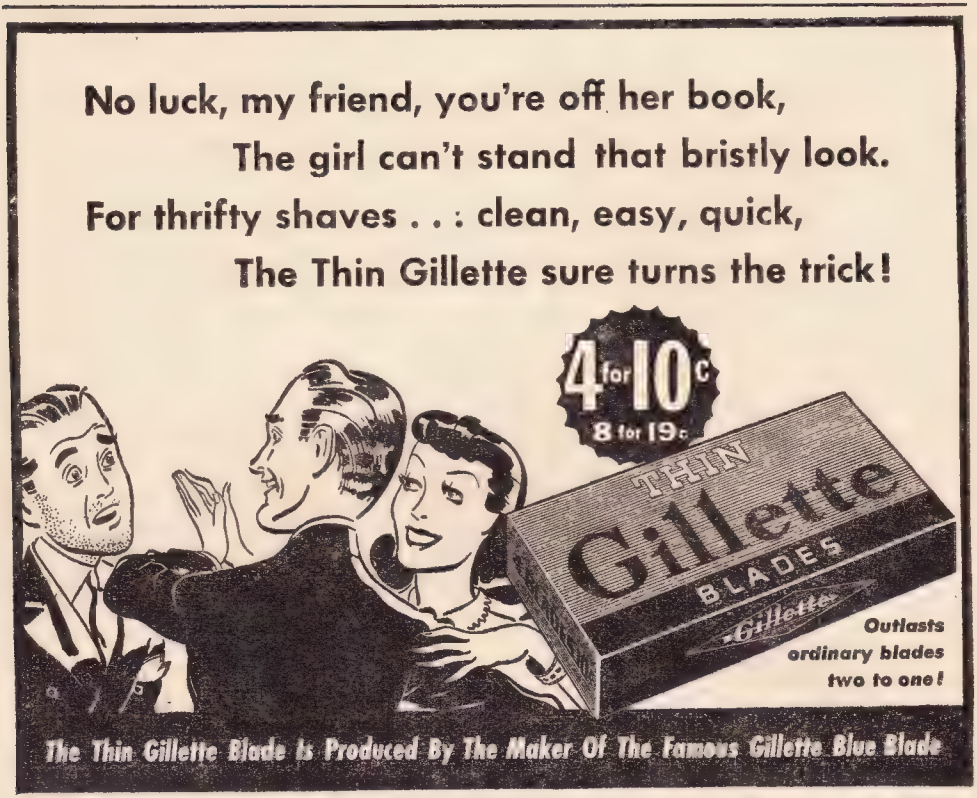
Sometimes I wake up and seem to feel the little house rocking on the waves, and all the memories that flowed around the barge come to life. Some of the wild passion that Steve aroused sweeps through me. I still see that look of triumph in his dark eyes.

I could never help loving Steve; it was part of me. But I'm thankful that I never let that love touch my kids. Never let it drag them down.

Jimmy understands this. I'll always thank Heaven for such a son, and such a lovely daughter.

THE END

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By
WILLAMETTA TURNEPSEED

Don't Let Him Get Away

There was one chance to hold him. But she'd always been a lady

"CLIFF! You should know better than to propose in the drop-a-pin gallery. Why, every word can be heard, all up and down the promenade." Anjean tried to be stern about it, but the woebegone expression on his face touched her heart.

"I don't care if everyone does know I asked you to marry me," he grumbled. "But I suppose you'll say 'no' as usual. I realize I don't rate any higher with you than all the other chaps in Winter Wonderland."

Anjean's full skirt swirled around her

as she sprang up and swayed out on the dance floor where he was obliged to follow.

"I'm honestly sorry, Cliff." She flashed him a compassionate glance from jewel-brown eyes.

He shrugged. "Okay, okay. Let's dance."

She caught a glimpse of Jules Cambridge in the promenade as they danced. He was standing at one of the big windows, leaning his forehead against the glass as he gazed out into the night. She hoped he was as absorbed as he looked and hadn't overheard that proposal.

Jules was so different from the wealthy, bored men who usually came to her brother-in-law's big luxury hotel. He had been injured in a laboratory explosion, and his physician had ordered mountain air. Just that afternoon a newspaperman had arrived to interview him about some scientific award he had won.

Glen Echo, where Winter Wonderland was located, was a plateau surrounded by the majestic, pine-clad peaks of Idaho. The resort's great living rooms were built along the bluff, and through immense plateglass windows guests could look across a marvelous stretch of country which had never been explored.

Within, the hotel was furnished with the most comfortable of modernistic furniture and decorated with backwoods touches of Indian blankets and antlered heads above the mantels. It was thrilling to sit before the blazing, hissing pine fires and watch the snowflakes whirling past the windows. It gave the pampered guests a feeling of roughing it without enduring the slightest inconvenience.

Jules had been there less than a week and had only one day more to go, for Sunday he was leaving on a camping trip. Anjean knew, with a queer ache in her heart that it wouldn't help any to think about him. She tried not to watch when he came out of the promenade and was immediately surrounded by girls.

"Patty never knows when she's had enough, does she?" Cliff remarked.

"Oh, do you know about that, too?"

"My dear, even the servants know that Million-dollar Patty proposed Thursday night to Jules in the drop-a-pin gallery."

"It's an epidemic," murmured Anjean.

But Cliff ignored her, continuing, "And the great Jules replied, 'I'm honored, but I'm wedded to my science. A wife would interfere with my work.' "

Anjean forced a laugh to chime with his before she asked, "What is his work?"

"I can't explain intelligently. But if you don't know, you're probably the only girl who hasn't cornered him and cooed, 'Oh, do tell me all about your career.' "

Patty was certainly hanging onto Jules' arm. And if he could resist the pretty heiress, what chance had Anjean? She was only a glorified nursemaid for her sister's children, and her smooth brown bob and amber eyes were no match for Patty's luscious blondness.

She thought it all over as she got ready for bed that evening. Jules had seemed to enjoy her company that first evening when he took her walking on the gallery. But nothing had come of it.

She had been surrounded by her usual group of admirers, and Jules had had to cut in to get a dance. They danced together like a dream, but be-

fore they had moved twice around the room, Anjean's admirers showed signs of cutting in. To avoid them, Jules swung her onto the gallery.

They stood looking out into the moon-washed night, chatting idly. His hand brushed hers and clasped it; their fingers entwined, and palm pressed close to palm. She felt as ecstatic as if he had kissed her.

He did that, too, before the stroll was over. A gentle kiss that lay lightly on her lips but drew the heart right out of her body.

She knew then that she loved him. But in the same instant she realized that love-making was a game to him; his technique was too perfect. She managed a shaken laugh when he raised his head.

"Grade A," she murmured. "You do it beautifully."

"You're no wash-out yourself," he retorted, looking down into her face.

For a moment they stood there, bathed in the reflected radiance of the ballroom lights. It outlined the firm lines of his features, made a shadow at the hollow of his dimple. His eyes traveled over her face slowly, following the smooth line of her dark hair, the soft curve of her cheek to the rounded fullness of her throat, resting at last on the parted curve of her lips.

Anjean pressed her hands tightly together in the folds of skirt, and gave no sign that at least two prophecies had come true: "When you fall, you'll fall hard" and "You'll probably fall for some fellow who won't give you a serious thought."

The next day she had gone up to the lodge where her sister lived, to mind the two children for a few days. Her other admirers had kept the telephone buzzing, but he had not called once. That showed her where she stood. Even if he felt strongly attracted to her, his work was more important to him than his emotions.

The morning's paper explained it all. Jules and his scientific honor were front page news, not only because of his brilliant career but for the fact that he was a member of a nationally prominent family.

When Anjean read the details of the research to while Jules had dedicated himself, she realized that the world needed him. Men of his type had benefited mankind through the ages. He was wise to realize that marriage might easily defeat his destiny. The ordinary demanding wife would not only upset the necessary routine, but rob him of the serenity essential to his work. Her heart throbbed painfully. Unhappily.

She was on hand for breakfast, that last morning, because Jules was always around early, but the reporters were already waiting to interview him. While he was answering their questions two forest rangers arrived. They were trying to locate Old Dock Anderson, a crazy old prospector who had escaped from the asylum where he had been shut up.

Anjean's brother-in-law and several guests decided to go along to trail the old man. Jules, hearing the excitement, came over and was drawn into the posse. They went off right after breakfast.

They had not returned by dark.

It would be just her luck for him not to attend that last dance, Anjean thought miserably as she poured pine oil into her bath. She had not realized that her entire body was aching until the warm water received her like soothing arms. Slowly the weariness left her. There was eagerness in every gesture as she slipped into the fragile black chiffon underthings that went with her

evening frock—a deliciously swank affair of black muslin, star-spangled and with a wide band of silver tissue around the hem of the full skirt.

The black sheenless slip made the stars more twinkly. The bodice was beautifully shirred, and the straps were slim strips of star-shaped links that caught the light and reflected it in little daring flashes of brilliance. Her corsage was of deep red roses.

Her thick dark hair, which had only a faint natural wave, fell softly to her shoulders, giving her a young and untouched look. A glow of expectancy, as if romance lay just ahead.

She was a sensation in the ballroom, but she only worried for fear that Jules would not come near her. Some men are stimulated by competition, but Jules, she knew, preferred to choose for himself.

The dance began early. When he had not showed up by ten o'clock she knew he wasn't likely to come, so she crept away to the gallery and ensconced herself comfortably in a big scarlet chair. Her ear caught the sound of a conversation being carried on in the drop-a-pin gallery.

"They'd gone together for five years," an elderly female voice was saying with relish, "and he just wouldn't propose. He loved her, but was too timid. So what do you suppose she did? Compromised him, my dear! Then he had to marry her, which suited them both. There are times when the most unconventional behavior serves legitimate ends."

Anjean sat up straight. Would it do her any good to compromise Jules? And would he love her if he had to marry her?

She thought of the expression in his eyes the last time he had looked at her, and felt definitely encouraged. Then she reflected on the fact that he was leaving tomorrow and wasn't at the dance tonight.

The momentary hope drained away, and desolation possessed her. Without realizing what she was doing, she plucked at the roses and crushed petals fluttered into her lap. A strong hand closed over hers and a deep, remembered voice was saying:

"Don't destroy the rose! A flower's time is even shorter than ours. I'm getting so I dislike to see them even cut from the bush."

"Lucky flowers. They don't have to think," she countered.

Oh, she had to do something! She couldn't let him go out of her life with just a casual goodby. She stared out into the dimness of night and prayed wordlessly. And in the silence she heard a promenader mention Old Dock Anderson.

Anjean's solution clicked in her brain. She gave a little, startled gasp, and Jules demanded to know the cause.

"Something I forgot," she lied. "My sister depended on me to close the lodge. All her silverware, her beautiful things are there. What if that crazy man got in?"

"You mean you forgot to lock up?"

"Yes, the shutters on the windows. We bar them from the inside. If Old Dock gets up that way—"

"He was headed in that direction, the rangers said," Jules broke in sharply. "Would it help any if I took you up?"

HALF an hour later they were rounding the last curve on the narrow mountain road that led to the lodge, and the buildings loomed darkly ahead.

"You go in. I'll take my flash and see if he's lurking about."

"As a reward I'll make you a cup

of coffee and then you can help me bar the windows," she replied as she slid out of the seat.

Her heart shook her slim body with its excited pounding. The heavy coat she had caught up slipped from her shoulders, but she left it in the seat and ran swiftly across the packed snow and unlocked the lodge door.

When she touched the light switch the lovely, comfortable living room sprang into view. The ready-laid pine knots caught her eye, and she touched a match to them and switched the radio to a dance program before she went on into the kitchen to make the coffee.

As soon as she had put it on the stove, she slipped out the side entry. She would drain the gasoline, she planned. She could turn the cock slightly so that the leakage wouldn't be suspicious. They'd have to stay here all night if she could put the telephone out of order.

The night was moonless and there was utter darkness in the shadow of the pines, but Anjean was too intent on her purpose to be frightened. There was no sign of Jules as she crossed the flat. She sped to the back of the car, and before she could stop she ran into him, working with the flashlight.

"Seems to be worn out or something," he said as he steadied her. "I was going to check up on the gas supply, although this is a heck of a time to do it. There!" as the light flashed on. "Something you wanted?"

Her heart was pounding in her throat, but she controlled it. Was there something odd in his tone of voice? Did he suspect?

"You shouldn't be out here," he went on. "If Old Dock is in the neighborhood, he'd be attracted by the lights. He might knock you over the head, and we mustn't have that, you know."

He pulled the coat from the seat and wrapped her in it carefully, and with his arm around her shoulder drew her back to the house.

"No, we couldn't have that," he repeated and bent his head, kissing her lingeringly, but lightly.

Anjean shut her eyes against the blinding glory of it. All she wanted of life was to be forever in his arms, while all he expected of love was a few lightly given kisses. A swift pain mingled with the wild uplift in her heart.

The radio was blaring as they entered the kitchen and she exclaimed: "Do turn the volume, will you? Right through the little hall there. I'll get the coffee."

When it was ready she put the kitchen shears on the tray with the cups, planning to cut the telephone wire on her way to the living room. But when she reached the small hall, there, idly fingering the phone, was Jules. She had just time to hide the shears in a dark alcove, when he turned and saw her.

"Hello, there," he said, relieving her of the tray. "I thought it might be fun to call the hotel."

"That's fine; I feel the need of a little excitement."

"That, woman, with me around, is the basest insult."

Anjean made a face, and he pulled her close with one arm. He kissed her swiftly before he strolled around the room, studying the woodcuts on either side of the door, and the fur pelts on floors and occasional tables. Anjean stood where he had left her, hot fingers trembling against her bruised lips. It was agony to love him so much when he took love so lightly.

But surely, if she did succeed in keeping him here and he had to marry

her, it would be worth it all. He couldn't possibly be married to her and not respond to the love she bore him.

And if she could be his wife, for even a short time, she would prove to him that she would not interfere with his life's work. Instead she would help him; she'd learn all about his ruling passion, and watch over him so that others would not interrupt. She'd keep his house running smoothly and show him that he really needed a wife. Needed her.

"Suppose you sit down over there and play the piano," she said suddenly. "They tell me you make Eddy Duchin sound like an amateur." She snapped off the radio.

She had thought he'd be at the piano by then, but when she turned back he was standing close behind her, with something in his eyes that sent panic fluttering in her throat. Her eyes dilated as she realized sharply that they were dangerously alone, and that her actions were open to misinterpretation. But his eyes were not on hers; they were on the scarlet curve of her passionate mouth. His breath came short as he took a step toward her.

She flung out a protesting hand, and he caught it to his mouth. His hard lips pressed against her pulse. The touch seemed to fire her blood. All in one frenzied moment she ran the gamut of panic, turmoil and frightened surrender. Suddenly she wanted to be in his arms, to have them close about her relentlessly; she wanted that ruthless, arrogant mouth of his to possess hers. In all the world there wasn't any place for her but with this man. She had been born for this. No matter if he went his way afterward without a backward glance.

Now his breath was hot upon her cheek; it was like a flame consuming her, consuming them both. The world was rocking deliriously at the touch of his hands; a low involuntary moan escaped her parted lips. Abruptly he let her go.

"Didn't we have some window barring to do?" he asked in a toneless voice.

Anjean felt that never in her life would she need to call upon her strength and pride as she did now to manage a calm reply:

"Yes, we'll make the rounds now, then go."

They went from room to room, opening windows to the sharp night wind while Jules closed the heavy shutters and dropped bars into place. Anjean felt that the wind was not more chill than the desolation that wrapped her heart.

But she had regained a degree of composure by now. "I heard about your winning a prize," she said. "I want to congratulate you. I didn't exactly understand all I read about it."

"I'd like to show you my lab and tell you about it," he began with quick enthusiasm that brought a new, intense expression to his clean-cut features. His work was her rival, and with a spell stronger than another woman could ever cast. "But it would take a long time and you'd just be bored anyway. You're much too pretty for a man to talk about anything but you. Come, let's have some music."

Anjean did not persist. She knew that showing too much interest in a man's hobby was fatal; if he was at all clever he suspected it was a line. Instead, she danced with him to the sensuous strains offered by the radio. Only a very faint hope survived.

He stood beside her between dances, with his arm around her waist. Her

head came just to the hollow of his shoulder. Once he plunged his hand into the silky thickness of her brown hair and drew it up to his face. She put her hand between his mouth and hers.

"Let's get a different orchestra," she suggested shakily.

His mood changed. There was a harsh note in his voice as he answered:

"I think it's time to get started back."

"All right. I'm ready," she replied brightly. Her hand stole to her throat in a betraying gesture, but he was not looking her way.

She might have known he was too clever for her; he had sidestepped cleverer women than she could ever be. She hadn't any weapons; nothing but her deep love for him, which he didn't want.

He gathered the cups and saucers and took them out into the kitchen and came back with her coat. His eyes met hers levelly, and there was no sign of disgust in his. Maybe he was flattered at her attempt, she thought dismally, even if he wasn't impressed. She managed another bright casual smile as he came toward her.

"Hate to do it, loveliest, but we've got to be going," he murmured as he help up the coat.

She turned her back and looked up at him across the stars on her shoulder, and he flung the coat aside to catch her in his arms. One hand around her slim waist held her close against him; the other slipped under her upraised arm and rested against her smooth shoulder. His cheek was against hers, and then his hand moved, the brown fingers caressing her throat possessively, to tilt her chin so that his mouth could find hers.

For a long moment they clung. Anjean stirred and he loosened his clasp, but she only turned to slip her own arms up around his neck and hold herself close in a surrendering kiss that told him the whole secret of her heart if he wanted to know it. It was the final desperate gesture. She loved him, and after tomorrow he would be gone. What did mere pride matter? What did anything count against this fire that darted in her veins?

He caught his breath sharply, and the sound of her name was harsh on his lips. Now that the moment was upon her, panic flared instinctively and she fought the hard compulsion of his hands.

"Not—not that," she sobbed against his mouth. "I can't."

He seemed to be beyond hearing her. His lips were draining her of strength and will. Yet when she sagged against him, his arms supported her with strange tenderness. And his voice in her ear was shaken but controlled.

"Forgive me, my sweet," he begged.

A banging at the door cut across their silence like the slash of a sword. The next moment the door flew open to reveal the wild, distorted features of Old Dock Anderson.

"Ha! Repent, you sinners!" he croaked, leveling a thin, quavering finger at them. "You painted maiden! And you, gin-guzzling playboy! Know ye not that the wrath of hell awaits you?"

A shudder seized Anjean, and she was thankful for the strength of Jules' arm that tightened about her as the thin cracked voice raved on. Then, suddenly, like a wizened animal, he sprang back through the door as abruptly as he had entered.

Anjean buried her face against Jules' arm.

"There, there, he's gone. I don't be-

lieve he'll come back." He smoothed her hair with gentle hands.

At that moment they caught the sound of a starting engine, and just as they reached the door the taillight of the roadster winked out around the curve. Jules drew her back into the lodge.

"Well!" he said weakly.

He swung toward her and she caught her breath, for she had never seen his face so alive, so gay with laughter. He caught her hands and drew her near.

"Fate has settled the big question for good. I'm afraid you're doomed, my dearest, for the phone is out of commission. *I* put it out of commission."

"You?" Her throat had swelled tight with rapturous hope so that the word was only a whisper.

He nodded, eyes dancing. "I did everything I could think of. I was going to wreck the ignition, but you stopped me. You almost caught me at the phone business. But you couldn't do a thing about Old Dock. You're caught now, young lady! You'll have to marry me."

"Jules!" In her excitement she shook him a little. "Jules! You mean *you've* been trying to—to—"

"To compromise you, my darling. Just before I saw you tonight I overheard a conversation, and it occurred to me it should work in a case where the girl is hard to get. I meant to propose to you and take my chance, but I was afraid you'd refuse me as you did all the others. As long as you thought I felt only indifferent, you trusted me. Just now your sweetness was almost too much for my control. Old Dock came just in time to keep you from hating me."

And then his confidence seemed to ebb. He looked at her doubtfully. "I —think you must love me a little. Your kisses seemed to say so, even though you didn't suspect it yourself."

Anjean smiled at him; a slow, inscrutable smile that began in her heart and ended up in little crinkles about the jewel-brown eyes, but he rushed on:

"The first minute I saw you I knew I had to have you always. Life wouldn't have any purpose without you in it."

Suddenly fear tore at her throat with clutching fingers, for she realized now that she loved him enough to give him up. "But I heard you say—a wife would interfere with your career."

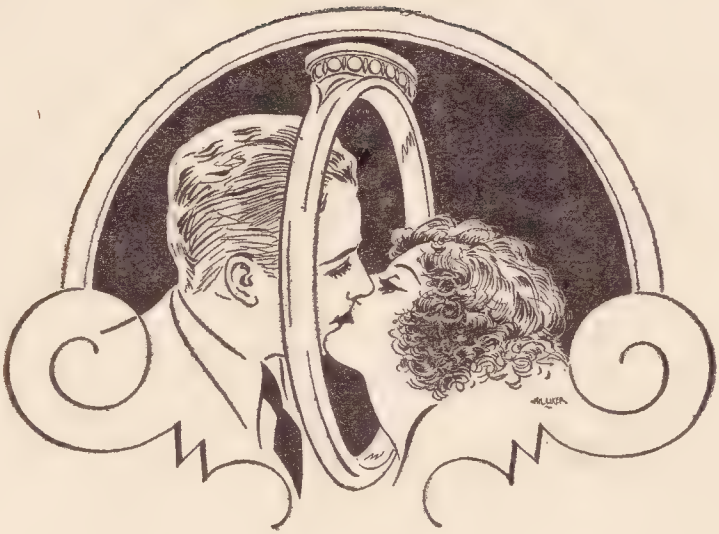
"The usual society-minded wife would, but not you. Oh, honey!" His voice went deep and husky, and his lips trailed softly across her cheek to her ear. "Please try to get used to the thought of being married to me. Can you? Will you?"

Anjean felt dizzy at the onrush of so much happiness. Her hands tightened on his shoulders. "Jules darling, I think it'll be—heaven."

"You're positive?" he demanded, begging reassurance, still doubtful of the miracle. "You love me? When I heard you refusing Cliff you sounded so sad about it. I couldn't have you pitying me like that."

He held her a little away from him, and in his searching gray eyes was a new, solemn expression. It was the look of a lover with all his defenses laid aside. That cocky, slightly arrogant air was gone now, so that she realized it had only been a shield against the world. And forever after, when that shield was up, she would be within it.

He read his answer in her eyes, and he drew her close again in that embrace which told her that she was where fate had meant her to be. Forever.



Why an Engagement Ring?

Is it a sign that says "Hands off, she's mine," or is it a survival of that ancient custom of marriage by purchase?

YOUR LOVE AFFAIRS

(*Continued from page* 36)

THE desire to please is undoubtedly one reason for gift making during courtship. Although I recall legends, as well as stories of modern love affairs, where the man presents his "outside heart" with priceless gifts in an effort to make her feel so indebted to him that she will give him—herself.

All of this may be additional proof that when a man spends every cent he possibly can on an engagement ring for his girl, he is answering that urge which is just a hangover of the ancient custom of marriage by purchase. Regrettable? Yes and no. After all, a woman wants to belong, though she does not want to be bought. Neither does an engagement ring do that, because if she marries the man it is considered her property.

Convention says that the engagement ring belongs to the man up to the time a plain band ring has been added to the same finger. After the marriage ceremony the engagement ring becomes her property for keeps.

There is just one thing about this purchase idea where a grain of truth filters through. The majority of men cease giving after marriage. From then on they supply the necessities. Perhaps a man feels that an engagement ring means, "She's mine." So he ceases giving gifts.

If this is true, then every girl should take advantage of a man's last fling at generosity and make the most out of her engagement ring.

Why not persuade him that you want to go with him to select it? After all, you are the one who is going to wear it. Perhaps you can convince him that people will admire him for his taste if you have a chance to try it on first so that he can see which one really fits and looks best on your hand.

A woman I know who has had four marriages has been to the jewelry store with each of the four men. She has become an expert at selecting engagement rings. However, I will do her this credit. Al-

though the law said she did not have to, she gave back to each husband his engagement ring when she didn't want to live with him any longer. She may have been unwise in her judgment, but she did have good taste.

Shopping for an engagement ring can be one of the greatest larks of your life. You will enjoy it. You can make your man enjoy it.

It is a very exciting experience. The clerks get a lot of fun out of couples coming to select engagement rings, too. One of them told me that he always tries to persuade such couples to buy solitaires. They are more valuable. If the wolf ever comes knock-knocking at the door, a solitaire can be pawned for more money than a more expensive ring designed with a number of smaller stones.

Men do not always realize that long fingers look better with marquis-shaped diamonds, or if the loved hand is square, why not a square-cut diamond in a simple setting? The only way to tell is to try them on and see. I have yet to find a girl who will go alone to a jewelry store to try on engagement rings. So the answer seems to be to persuade the man to take you along when he goes shopping for one.

There is a current trend for enormous semi-precious stones handsomely set, rather than small precious stones, for engagement rings.

An engagement ring usually has a stone of some kind in it. When Zeus forgave Prometheus for stealing sacred fire from heaven, he ordered him to fashion a ring from one of the links of his chain, and to place in it a piece of the rock to which he had been bound. This is supposed to have been the first ring set with a stone.

Although a ring with a stone in it is the accepted form for an engagement ring, there are people who prefer the kind that were used by the Romans as pledge rings. These were usually made with two links of metal and were called "twin-born," meaning that that is how the man and the woman should continue through life.

When a man puts an engagement ring on a girl's finger, I wish he could say and mean what he says when he utters these old words that centuries ago men always murmured as the ring went over her finger:

"This circle, though but small about,
The devil, jealousy, will keep out."

That old devil, jealousy, wrecks a lot of love affairs, and if the circle of a ring could keep him out, I am sure that there are many women who would wear a ring so wide they couldn't move their finger.

It is a mighty sweet memory to recall what a man said when he put an engagement ring on your finger. Probably the shortest sentence at this time is the sweetest, something like just "Forever." That is a sort of promise. There are other men who slip a ring on a slender finger with a prayer. For instance, something that men said long ago, which has been memorized and said by many a modern man is:

"Love him who gave thee this ring of gold,
'Tis he must kiss thee when thou art old."

If you have no particular preference for a stone, you might like to choose your birthstone or his. Look over the list and make your choice according to the month in which one of you was born:

BIRTHSTONES

January	Garnet
February	Amethyst
March	Bloodstone
April	Diamond
May	Emerald
June	Agate or Pearl
July	Ruby
August	Sardonyx
September	Sapphire
October	Opal
November	Topaz
December	Turquoise

Regardless of the month, if the man you love and are going to marry has a fondness for liquor, you might like to choose an *amethyst*. There is a belief handed down to us from the Greeks that the amethyst is a charm against drunkenness.

Diamonds are the most popular of all stones for an engagement ring. They have a standard value and it is believed that the gorgeous sparkle in a diamond is the fire of love. And the love that two people bear for each other will not burn out as long as the woman wears his diamond upon her hand.

Emeralds have gained in popularity recently. They are fabulously expensive; it is a comforting thought that anything as full of flaws as an emerald, can cost so much money. There is no such thing in the world as a flawless emerald. I think that is why they are my favorite stone. They are more like humans. They have value, yet at the same time they have faults.

From the standpoint of an engagement ring, the emerald is a good one because it is supposedly possessed with the power to protect. It is the emblem of virtue. In the days of ancient Rome, emeralds were the symbol of womanhood.

Pearls are chosen by many, no matter what their birth month, because these stones that come from the bottom of the sea are supposed to awaken great desire in a man. In Oriental countries they are thought to possess health-giving powers. While it is true that a pearl becomes more beautiful when a person wears it, legend has it that the pearl in turn makes the wearer have a more beautiful complexion. Then, too, the Goddess of Love chose pearls as the only jewel she would ever wear. So if we believe our mythology, we must believe that pearls provoke love.

When a man presents a girl with a *ruby*, she can be pretty sure that he has selected a stone he wouldn't mind wearing himself. For years the ruby has symbolized masculinity.

Sapphires are not selected very often, but they are a very happy choice. They are credited with being a safeguard against misery.

Opals should be chosen only for the person who was born in October. There is a stronger superstition about opals bringing bad luck than any other stone—if worn by a person who was not born in that month.

People who were born in December have a stone of not much value as their own—the *turquoise*. Yet there is no stone that is credited with bringing the wearer as much luck.

Engagement rings were originally placed on the third finger of the left hand, for sentimental reasons. There was a belief that there was a nerve which ran direct from that finger to the heart. By placing his ring on that finger the man was coming as nearly as he could to encircling his loved one's heart. But our more modern practical minds bring forth the idea that the engagement ring is worn on the left hand to signify the subjection of the woman to the man. The left hand is her weaker side.

No matter what they thought ages ago and what the modern "know-alls" think today, every girl knows that she wants an engagement ring put on her finger by the man who returns her love. And when he puts it there I hope for both your sakes that he will say, "forever." And that it will stay there forever, which means even after death parts you.

Love is a game! If you are not an expert at winning, perhaps you are trying to play with too many different people. Concentrate on one partner. Study every move he makes; learn what his expressions mean; never fail him when he indicates what he wants; always praise him when you can. When you learn to be a partner who can be depended upon you will be lucky in love as well as at cards.

Dollars for Letters

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Keep your stories as brief as possible. Write them naturally and simply, as you would write a letter to a friend. They will be judged for their human interest, not for literary style. All *manuscripts accepted for publication will be paid for; none of them can be returned.*

DEAR ALLIE LOWE MILES:

Your name sounds a bit Hawaiian, but I have seen your picture so I know you are not a native of those beautiful islands. Neither am I. But I know them like a book. I came to New York to see if I could sell some stories about the Hawaiian cowboys. I could have had better luck since my arrival, selling stories. But I wouldn't have asked for better luck than I've had in meeting a girl with whom I fell in love, proposed and married in the short space of 1½ days. There was a night in there, too—I mustn't forget that.

The way I met her just proves that you never can tell. I was waiting outside a telephone booth in Grand Central when suddenly its swinging glass door opened and out stepped a girl in tears. She was so blinded by her tears that she just bumped right into my chest. I put my arms around her and said, "Well, now, what's the matter?" She said that she had come to town to shop and had lost her purse. She had found a nickel in the breast pocket of her dress and phoned home, reversing the charges, and now she had to go to the telegraph office and wait until her family wired her some money, and it made her so mad she couldn't help crying.

Well, you can't leave an attractive girl in tears waiting around in a big station, so I told her I would wait with her; and we got so interested in each other that we went to a little movie house near the station. In the darkness I found myself holding her hand; I had never enjoyed holding a girl's hand so much in all my life.

The whole truth is that we forgot all about the money her family had wired to her until it was time for her to go home that night. We forgot everything except that it was great to be together, and instead of going home that night she phoned her family that she hadn't finished her shopping and she was going to stay in New York. We did the night clubs. The next morning she shopped for a new outfit and wore it for her wedding at high noon.

We have been married now for a matter of months, and by the time you read this we will be on our way back to Hawaii.

I just thought I would tell you my story. There may be a great many that are more exciting; but certainly none more wonderful.

T. H. of T. H.

When it comes to falling in love I guess the unexpected always happens. For years I had been living in a tiny town in New Jersey. Existing I should say, not really living. Most of my leisure I spent reading, and from the gay stories I read about glamorous places and glamorous people, I wove my dreams and yearned for them to come true.

And then one day they did. My home is situated on a main highway where there is a great deal of traffic, especially in the summer. We have several acres of flowers so we put a stand by the road and sell to the travelers. One day last summer a shiny yellow roadster stopped

and I went out. Some one tall and handsome, with the bluest eyes I have ever seen, turned my whole world topsy-turvy. Just like that.

A Southern accent demanded three—or was it four bouquets? I know you will forgive me and understand that I forget that part of it. When he drove away I felt quite blue, wondering if he was gone for good.

Why couldn't I have been sophisticated and beautiful? I waited. That evening a yellow roadster drove slowly by the house and a horn sounded. The next day the same thing happened, and again the next.

And guess what's going to happen now? I'm going to live in the South, and I wouldn't be a bit surprised if I drove down there in a yellow roadster with a young man with the bluest eyes I have ever seen.

HELEN C. of New Jersey

P. S.—The surprise is, he likes me because I'm *not* glamorous!

DEAR MRS. MILES:

I hope it does you good to have people confide their love problems to you. I can see how it does them good. That's why I'm taking a try at it.

Last summer was my first year out of college. I couldn't get any kind of a job that appealed to me and it was the end of August. I felt a bit discouraged. So when I picked up the paper to look through the ads I decided I would take anything. I took a vow to myself that the next day would see me with a job; I didn't care what.

I know about everything that goes on inside of an automobile. And I like to drive. So I put my hat under my arm in a very meek manner and sought the job of a chauffeur. I got it.

My employer was a girl. A girl on the North Shore of Chicago with a lot of money and nothing to do but go to parties. She wanted me to drive her up to Wisconsin on a house party. It was over Labor Day. She decided to stop at a tourist camp on the way up. She wanted to so we did. And the only thing available was a one-room cottage. She wanted it; so we took it. And naturally I went out to the car to spend the night in the tonneau.

I was pretty cramped as to position and wondered why anyone so sweet could be so headstrong. I had never met anyone like her. She was a beauty. But she has a man's mind. While I was twisting and turning I wrapped myself up in a blanket on the floor. Then she came out to the car and said it was silly for me to stay out there; that there was a couch in the cabin and I should come in and make myself comfortable. She wanted me to. So I did. The result is that by morning I asked her if she would marry me. She said that was why she had hired me.

Well, I love her and she loves me. But it is an awful dose for a man to fall in love with a girl who has a lot of money and a masculine mind as well as a very feminine and desirable body.

As soon as we got back from that Labor Day week-end, I gave up my job as chauffeur to her and finally got a position with the Public Service Company, where I have climbed from $35 to $75 a week. She does not want to wait to get married, but I insist because I am not going to live off of her money. There is a very definite chance of my making more money, and I feel that when I do, it will all be turned over to her and she will probably handle it very well. Waiting to be married is a tough job but it will be worth it.

J. B. of Chicago, Illinois

I want to confide in you and your readers the story of how I fell in love with a sailor.

My life was very much the same routine. I went to a convent school, attended parties and had dates with young men from my office and parish. I couldn't complain of being a wall flower, yet I certainly wasn't the belle of the ball.

Then one night I accepted a date with my girl friend to attend a navy ball to celebrate Armistice Day. Little did I realize that I was really accepting an invitation to love.

As we entered the auditorium I seemed to sense that someone was watching me. I couldn't turn for fear of appearing ridiculous, but when I reached the friendly shelter of a corner I scanned the entire company. It was during an intermission and the dancers were in groups chatting or in the buffet picking up a snack. I let my eyes rove over to a far end of the hall, seeking that unknown person who stared so steadily.

As if drawn by a magnet, my eyes rested upon a sailor who was looking my way. He wasn't that dashing young Lochinvar type, but something about him held my attention. When the musicians started to play, he walked slowly over to where I stood, smiled and held out his hands to me. Fascinated, I moved into his arms and we danced out into a sea of blue uniforms and formal gowns.

For a time neither of us spoke; but a thrill passed through me each time he would smile in my direction.

He took me home that night, and when I said goodby it was after we had planned to see each other again.

During the days that followed I walked on air, living in a veritable seventh heaven. But there came a time when it was his last night to be ashore. From the moment he stepped into my house, we could tell this last night would be sad.

We both tried to be gay, but a barrier of restraint had arisen between us silently chanting, "It's all over, it's all over."

The clock struck twelve. Liberty would soon be up. "Please, God," I prayed, "please make him speak. Make him say that he will be back."

He turned to me, trying hard to be nonchalant. He said, "I suppose I'd better leave or I'll be late for the last launch back to ship. I had a great time here. Thanks."

I swallowed a lump in my throat and mumbled, "That's all right." For the life of me I couldn't find the sophisticated thing to say. My happiness was too involved to toss it off lightly. Silence filled the room.

Bill turned quickly, caught me to him. "Oh, darling, darling, I can't leave without saying it. I love you so, but I'm only a seaman and have nothing to offer you. Will you wait until my enlistment is up? Would you marry me then?"

Of course I told him I would wait; being sure he loved me gave me a happiness I had never felt in all my life before.

So now I am getting my wedding clothes together while I wait for him to come back to me. And I am praying, "Please God, help me keep this happiness and help me keep him in love with me."

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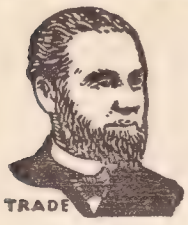

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By ROWENA FARRAR

Wedding Night

"Oh, please go away! Don't come near me!"

HE LEANED against the white column and looked out across the ruffled lake to where the darkness was pierced with gay pinpoints of light. There was another resort hotel on the far shore. Somewhere in the purple shadows there was laughter. It was a perfect honeymoon retreat.

Soon, very soon now, his waiting would be over. He would go in and take his bride in his arms. She was his forever. Her curving smile, her laughing dark eyes, her gallantly tilted head —all this. Fierce exultance invaded his heart.

At this moment his dashing bachelor friends would not have recognized Cameron Tropp, scion of a wealthy and prominent Long Island family, in this devoted, one-woman man.

He took a deep, solemn breath, and thought with regret of having so freely indulged in the champagne toasts of last night's hilarious stag party. To steady his hands he folded them behind his elbows. And almost at once he turned to go in.

He had waited long enough. Conventions, tradition and ritual had stood like high hurdles between him and the girl of his heart. Getting married, he had found, was not a simple, sacred procedure. It was bedlam.

It took months of hectic preparation. Thousands of persons were involved—caterers, fitters, decorators, musicians, bridesmaids, ushers, intimate friends, business friends, acquaintances, relatives and servants. It included everything but fireworks, and he would not have been surprised if skyrockets had swished through the air as he and Theo marched out of the cathedral at high noon that day.

He paused at the door of the bridal suite, knocked lightly, and waited breathlessly for his wife's shy welcome. He had shared her too long with their bright, insatiable world, but tonight she was his alone.

Tense silence followed his knock. He hesitated, then tried the door. It was locked.

"Theo!" He called to her softly, anxiously, still certain that she would welcome him with sweet surrender.

But he was faced with a stubborn silence that became increasingly unbearable. He knocked again in sudden fearful distress.

"Theo, darling!"

At last she answered, but in a way that drained all eagerness from him.

"Please, please go away!" Her cry was muffled, as if she had buried her face in a pillow and intended never to lift it again.

He had left her only a short hour before with flushed cheeks and radiant eyes. Following their arrival from New York by plane, he had ordered a festive dinner served in their sitting room. What could have happened in that interval to reduce her to tears and fright? Why was she locking him out?

It was preposterous to think that she was playing a game. Another, weaker woman might resort to coyness on her wedding night, but not Theo. That was one of the reasons he loved her. She was so real.

She could not possibly have had a sudden change of heart. Or could she? Could it be that she regretted her choice? It had taken him months to win her away from Gregory Roth. She had had many ardent wooers since her debut last winter, but Roth had been the only rival he feared. Had he really won her, or had he merely high-pressured her into a marriage from which she now shrank?

"I'm going out for another smoke," he called to her uncertainly. "When I return, I'll expect this door to be unlocked."

HE SPENT an anxious half hour on the balcony, staring at nothing at all. The night had lost its charm. Its nose was shiny and its hair unbrushed. There were wrinkles around its eyes. It was no longer the subject for a serenade.

When at last he knocked again, the door fell open before him, and he walked quickly inside. A lovely gown of satin and lace lay on the foot of the bed, a tiny team of silken mules stood waiting on the floor. There were sweet-smelling creams and powders on the dressing table.

Everything was as he imagined it would be—intimate and dear. Only the

bride was out of place. He looked for her in every imaginable corner of their suite, actually peered under the bed.

He felt more angry than anxious as he stood, feeling like a fool, in the small pastel sitting room, and tried to think. Lord! What was a man supposed to do at a time like this?

Women were a peculiar breed. He had never pretended to understand them. His head began to throb with pain. He had felt hang-overish all day, and this just about finished him off.

He forced himself to reason calmly, and very soon he came to the conclusion that she must be somewhere on the hotel grounds. He made his way through the lobby as casually as possible, though he might as well have carried a placard with *Bridegroom* printed on it. He was a marked man. The society editors had seen to that.

Once outside, in the sheltering darkness, he ran like a wild man from one place to another until at last he found her huddled on a bench down by the lake. His voice shook with relief as he called her name.

She looked up at him without a sign of welcome. Etched by moonlight, her small chin trembled beneath her unsmiling mouth. Her dark hair fell in careless waves about her delicate, troubled face.

Her hands were busy; she was plucking the petals from her corsage of gardenias and rolling them between finger and thumb with unexpected cruelty.

"I was worried about you," he said gently, controlling his anger. "Are you all right?"

"Of course," she said in a stiff tone, and turned her face away.

He hesitated, watching her. At this moment they were strangers, and the realization stunned him. He asked, "Anything on your mind?"

"Yes," she said, with a sharp indrawn breath. "So much that I—I'd rather be alone."

"It's midnight, darling," he protested.

"All right," she snapped. "It's midnight. Does it matter?"

He had never heard her use that tone of voice before, and it shocked him. He hated shrewish women. He had watched her mother issuing crisp orders about the wedding—scolding, insisting, commanding—and he had thought, "I'm glad Theo is not like that."

But maybe she was like that. Had she been hiding this trait from him? He could not bring himself to believe that of her.

"What's the matter with you?" he demanded. "Are you sorry you married me? Are you wishing you could undo those vows you took today? Are you, by any chance, thinking about Gregory Roth?"

He despised himself for asking such a question, but he could not help it.

She tilted her head at a belligerent angle.

"Am I supposed to report to you every single thought I have?" she inquired tensely. "Am I?"

"Let's not quarrel, Theo," he urged. "We're spoiling everything. I shouldn't have mentioned Roth. I know you haven't seen him in weeks."

"But I have," she retorted perversely "I saw him this very morning."

"When? Where?"

"At home, just before we left for the cathedral. He begged me to elope with him—threatened to kill himself if I refused."

"You didn't take him seriously? Rejected suitors have been making that threat for years." Cameron tried to laugh.

"Father threw him out," she said dully.

"And now you're sorry?"

"It would be simply awful if he really carried out his threat. You can see that!"

"Stop worrying about him. He has no more intention of killing himself than I have of killing you."

"You're jealous," she accused him. "We promised never to be jealous of each other."

"Look," Cameron said patiently. "Are you trying to fight with me?"

She made a little helpless gesture with her hands. "I don't know," she whispered.

HE KNELT down to take her in his arms. But she shrank back beyond his reach with a sharp cry of dismay. "Please don't touch me!"

He straightened slowly, his gray eyes wide, his jaws set. "Just when," he asked bitterly, "did you discover that my touch is offensive to you?"

"Go away!" she pleaded desperately. "Go away. *Please!*"

"I can't leave you out here alone. We're in the spotlight, Theo. The glittering pageant is over, but now it's up to us to live happily ever after. Or make a stab at it, anyway."

"I don't care!" She stood up and moved farther away from him.

"You're forcing me to think that you don't love me."

"All right." She whirled around. "I don't love you. I don't love anybody. I don't want to be married at all. Is that perfectly clear?" Her voice had risen to a high pitch.

"Quite clear," he said grimly. "What do you want to do about it?"

"I want to go home." She was sobbing now. "I don't want to see you again—ever."

"Don't say that!" he ordered, gripping her shoulders with angry fingers. "You can't mean it, Theo. I love you. I want you. You're my wife, darling."

"If you don't let go of me," she said shrilly, "I'll scream. I'll scream so loud everybody in the hotel will come running."

His grip hardened deliberately, and she made good her threat. But her scream was shut off quickly by his hand. He clapped it firmly over her mouth and muffled the sound. She set her teeth on his little finger and clung like a young savage. Sharp pain racked him, but he held on.

For a moment they were like wrestlers in a clinch, and there was no referee to break it up. At length, however, as if by some invisible signal, they relaxed their primitive hold on each other and stood apart with blanched faces and blazing eyes.

Cameron was stricken with the sickening realization that his romance was dying a violent death. And why? He could not understand it. He was through trying.

"Go pack your things," he said harshly. "We can't go on like this."

She turned away from him in obvious relief, and took a few hurried steps toward the hotel. But suddenly she crumpled down upon the grass.

He stood nearby, staring down at her in skeptical silence. Her stillness became a part of the hushed night and suddenly he was afraid.

She was as light and fragrant to hold as an armload of flowers. Carrying her into the hotel lobby meant running a gauntlet of curious eyes, but it couldn't be helped. He cursed them all under his breath for staring at him, for not going to bed early.

"Send up a doctor," he said to the desk clerk in passing.

Somehow he reached their rooms and shut the curious world outside. He dropped his fragile burden on the bed and placed his ear against her heart. She was breathing, thank Heaven. He rubbed her hands briskly, forced water between her pale lips.

Presently her thick lashes fluttered and brushed warm color on her cheeks. Her eyes look startled as they darted about the room, focusing briefly on him. Then she frowned.

"I'm all right," she assured him in a crumpled voice. "Just go away and leave me alone!"

She turned over on her side with her face to the wall. Her small body shook with sobs.

He stood looking down at her, wondering despairingly what he should do next. Once again he made an effort to soothe her, but she cringed at his touch. She did not love him. She would not even bother to pretend.

He went over to the window and stood slumped against the sill. A great weariness leaned on him. His thoughts were in chaos. He felt disillusioned and cheated.

By no stretch of the imagination had he thought they would ever quarrel like a fishwife and a tough guy—certainly not on their wedding night. Their high adventure, begun with such glittering promise, had come to an ignominious end.

He had shied away from marriage until Theodora Deering, young and vital and lovely, came into his life. From the moment of their meeting, at her coming out ball, he had wanted her with all his heart.

She had stood like a young queen in a dramatic white dress against a background of costly flowers, receiving her many friends. Her first smile of welcome still lingered before his eyes.

From that moment of clasping her hand he had lost interest in polo, in golf, in Wall Street, in all of his once glorious freedom. A wife, a home, and children were the only things that really mattered. He had wanted the best, and Theo had measured up in every way.

Until tonight.

She had wanted the best, too, and he had tried to fulfill her dreams. Without conceit, he had known himself to be a better man than Gregory Roth. He had been completely confident that he could make her happy.

Until tonight.

He noticed that she had stopped sobbing, and he turned hopefully. But she was snatching her lovely trousseau garments together and tossing them helter-skelter into her bag. He came over to her side.

"Of course you realize," he said slowly, "that you are behaving very badly. I have one request to make. If you are determined to wreck our marriage before giving it a chance, please do it my way. We'll have to put up a happy front for a few months at least. Otherwise the society editors and gossips will make mincemeat of us."

"I don't give a hang about the society editors," she flared. "I'm used to them."

"For your own sake," he told her sternly, "you've got to give a hang! You're upset now. I want you to go quietly to bed and try to rest. I'll sleep on the couch in the sitting room. We can make definite plans tomorrow."

"I'm going home tonight," she said, her eyes blazing with fever, her hands pulling at each other. "Nothing you can say will stop me."

"I refuse to let you make a fool of yourself," Cameron said sternly.

Moving quickly, before she realized his intention, he shut the door and locked

her in the bedroom. Now it was done, a surge of relief enveloped him. He stood on the sitting-room side of the door and girded himself against her cries.

SHE pounded and kicked the door until she realized her efforts were wasted. He refused to weaken. When all was quiet, he lit a cigarette and smoked nervously. His face was ashen. His hands shook. His temples were hammering mercilessly in his head. He sat down and held his head in his hands.

A moment later her voice, sharp and determined, wrecked the silence. "If you don't unlock this door I'm going to jump out the window!"

Cameron thought that over in silence. They were on the seventh floor, and there was a concrete terrace below. She was bluffing, of course. Theo Deering loved life too well to kill herself.

Before he could frame an appropriate reply to the rash threat, a knock sounded on the outer door.

The doctor had arrived.

Cameron had forgotten that he had ordered a doctor, and now he did not know what to do with him. In her present mood Theo might bite his finger, too. It was an awkward moment in which to receive a third party, no matter how strongly he felt the need of moral support.

The doctor was a little man with piercing black eyes, quick, capable hands and a big head. His clothes were shabby, but he walked in briskly when Cameron opened the door, announced with dignity that he was Dr. Hall, and set his bag on a chair.

"My wife—fainted," Cameron explained lamely. "But she's all right now. Sorry we got you out at this time of night."

"I'm used to it," snapped Dr. Hall. "It's my job. You look as if you're about done in yourself," he added, giving the young man a swift scrutiny.

"Oh, no. I'm fine. Perfectly fine."

The doctor bowed and turned to pick up his bag.

The bride chose this inauspicious moment to repeat her melodramatic threat and make it more convincing. Her fists angrily pelted the door.

"If you don't unlock this door by the time I count three," she called out fiercely, "I'm going to jump! I'm not bluffing. I *mean* it, Cam!"

The doctor frowned, glanced at the door, then at Cameron, now flushed and embarrassed, and set his bag down again. "Lovers' quarrel?" he inquired with a faint smile.

"I don't know what it is," Cameron confessed. "Suddenly, for no reason at all, she started hating me."

The doctor rubbed his chin. At length he said thoughtfully, "I read a glowing account of your wedding in the evening papers. It must have been a great social triumph. But young man, I marvel at your lack of intelligence."

"My *what?*" Cameron bridled. To have this queer little doctor turn on him, too, was more than he could bear.

The doctor went on talking with the bridegroom almost too angry to listen.

"Of course I'm just a village doctor, and not supposed to know very much. But I once occupied a luxurious suite of offices in your New York, and boasted very fashionable clients. A constant parade of ailing women passed through my door. Most of them were perfectly willing to pay exorbitant fees, but very few of them were willing to follow my advice. I gave up in disgust."

"What has that got to do with me—with us?" the young man said sharply. "She has never been sick."

The doctor ignored the question. "How long were you two engaged?"

"About three months."

"And I suppose your engagement party was something to remember?"

"It certainly was. What of it?"

"Nothing, only it started the ball rolling. There were dozens and dozens of celebrations of various shapes, forms and fashions filling the days right up to the wedding?"

"You seem to know all about it." Cameron looked at the doctor curiously, more interested than he cared to admit.

"I know the pattern. Did you have any serious rivals?"

"Just one. He crashed Theo's room this morning just before the wedding. Begged her to elope with him. Pulled that old gag of threatening to kill himself."

"And after your gorgeous wedding and brilliant reception, you flew here?"

"Yes."

"I suppose your best friends tried to steal your luggage, or some such horseplay?"

"Yes."

"Was it her first plane ride?"

"Yes, and she loved every minute of it. She was as excited as a child."

"In other words," the doctor said sternly, "she's been involved in a mad, gay, romantic, exciting whirl for weeks on end."

"Yes!"

The doctor jumped to his feet and made a rush for the door. "My Lord, man!" he exclaimed, "that girl is on the verge of cracking up. Unlock this door at once. She might actually carry out her threat to jump!"

Cameron's heart crashed against his ribs. He tore at his pocket for the key, and in spite of a trembling hand managed to insert it in the lock. But it jammed, and he began heaving his shoulder against the door.

Dr. Hall shoved him aside and approached the task of unlocking the door more calmly. It responded to his touch and the two men rushed inside.

Theo was framed in the window, like a portrait, peering curiously down into the shadows, as if wondering what awaited her there. Cameron caught her up in his arms and pulled her away from danger. He walked about the room holding her close, crooning over her and bitterly reproaching himself.

"Drink this," Dr. Hall ordered, holding a half filled glass to her pale lips.

She swallowed the liquid without protest, and almost instantly she was asleep.

Cameron looked helplessly at the doctor.

"She hates you tonight," Dr. Hall said bluntly. "She hates everybody. And no wonder. Why can't you people learn to live less spectacularly? Her emotions are in tatters. Now you know why I question your intelligence."

"So do I," the younger man agreed. "What—what am I to do with her now?"

"That girl needs complete rest, away from you, and away from everything and everybody she knows." He pulled at his chin once more. "Do you think you can trust me?"

Cameron nodded.

"Then I suggest taking her to my house. There's a room overlooking the garden that will be perfect for her. It is simple and cool and quiet. My wife will give her every care. After a few days of absolute rest, perhaps she will be able to face the thought of marriage. But I want you to promise me not to come near her. Just stand by and wait until she comes to you of her own accord."

WITH his heart protesting, Cameron carried his wife out to the doctor's car, and sat holding her in his arms during the short ride from the hotel to the village. They passed a post office, a general store, a garage, and one or two other small shops.

At length the doctor turned into a shaded, narrow drive. The house was white clapboard with green blinds. The room overlooking the garden was just as he had described it—simple and cool and quiet, scrupulously clean.

Mrs. Hall, a buxom, motherly person in a printed wrapper, welcomed them without betraying her surprise. She took immediate charge of the young patient. The doctor insisted on driving Cameron back to the hotel.

"You and I are going fishing soon," he said at parting. "But first, try to get some rest. You need it."

It took Cameron's last reserve to face living in the bridal suite alone. But once inside, he fell upon the bed, completely exhausted, and slept the clock around.

For two days he slept, waking only for meals and news of his bride. On the third day he wandered aimlessly about the hotel grounds, trying not to notice the curious stares and furtive whispers directed at him—the lonely bridegroom. That afternoon he walked briskly around the lake.

What a hell of a honeymoon this was!

He raged at himself for not insisting at the very first, that they skip the fanfare of a big wedding. He had hated the idea all along. But Theo had been brought up to consider it the only acceptable way to be married, and her mother had expressed her own elaborate views in no uncertain terms. It was her big moment and she intended to make the most of it.

It had been a terrible wedding. He could see that now. And a terrible honeymoon. He comforted himself with the thought that present circumstances, however awkward, were better than a lot of things that might have happened.

On the fourth and fifth days he and the doctor went fishing in the lake. The sky was a bright blue canopy, the sun brilliant but not too strong. The air was laden with the fragrance of pines and a million late summer perfumes.

But Cameron was not interested in Nature's beauty or man's sport. He wanted news of his wife.

"Is she better? Has she asked about me? Did she like the flowers I sent her?"

"She hasn't seen them," Dr. Hall retorted. "She picks her own flowers from my garden. I took yours to a sick neighbor."

"Then she is able to be up?"

"Yes. Yesterday she fed the chickens. This morning I left her in the kitchen with my wife, learning to bake a cake. She says tomorrow she's going to rake the leaves."

After that, for days, Cameron called himself all kinds of a sap. Here he was occupying the bridal suite of a fashionable resort hotel, alone and miserable, while his socially prominent wife raked leaves and fed chickens! Had any man ever been driven to such a corner?

In desperation he concentrated on his fishing, with the result that he made the record catch for the season.

He was on friendly terms with everyone in the hotel by this time, and received hearty congratulations. But no one that mattered was there to share his small triumph.

That night he went slowly to his rooms, dreading those first few mo-

ments of emptiness that hit him like a blow every time he entered them. But the instant he stepped inside he knew, by the sudden pounding of his heart, that he was not alone.

He looked sharply about the room.

His bride was seated, almost primly, on the small sofa by the window. The room was in shadows, but even in the half light she looked fresh and rested and more lovely than ever. She stood up and smiled at him shyly.

"I wanted to send for you," she began, "but I was afraid you wouldn't come. So I came after you."

He stood quite still, regarding her carefully. Never again would he try to touch her if there was any danger of her cringing. She moved nearer, her eyes lifted pleadingly.

"Thank you," she said softly, "for standing by."

"You have no reason to thank me," he said. "Give our friend, Dr. Hall, full credit. I only obeyed his orders."

She was silent for a moment, as if awaiting some sign from him. He did not move. He steeled himself against caring too much. If she still wanted to go home, he would not protest. If she wanted to stage another difficult scene, she would have to do it alone. But if, by some miracle, she wanted to be his wife—

Her soft cry broke the poignant silence. "Must I—come all the way?"

"Yes," he answered tensely, "you must."

She walked slowly, steadily into his arms.

"If we ever have a daughter," she told him, with a little tender laugh, "her wedding is going to be the kind we would have chosen for ourselves. A prayer, a solemn vow, a bit of sacred music, and a simple blessing."

In the next issue:

Three on a Kiss

By VIRGINIA NIELSEN

His bride's first kiss was given to another man

By
VIRGINIA NIELSEN

A Girl or a Gun

After all, would any man hesitate?

EVERYONE was talking about the war in Europe. Paul was leading the conversation with his casual brilliance, discussing countries of which Margo had never heard, mentioning foreign statesmen as familiarly as if he knew them.

He sat with one long leg thrown over the arm of Margo's best chair, his dark, rumpled hair falling over his brow, waving a cocktail to punctuate his sentences.

He was excited and handsome and utterly dear, she thought, and the pain that had lain a hard lump in her breast for the last three months tightened around her heart.

She jumped up quickly and began passing more canapés. But it didn't help. Nobody paid her any attention. Nobody cared whether the canapés came around again or not. Least of all, Paul.

"You'd think he was in his own home," Margo thought bitterly. "You'd think we'd been married for years!"

And that drove the pain deeper. For they weren't married at all. Probably

never would be, she thought, swallowing the lump that hurt her throat. It was too convenient for him this way.

For a year now he had been shaking the cocktails at her parties, sprawling all over her furniture as if he owned it, standing beside her to bid her guests goodby, letting everyone know he considered her his girl. Yet he never mentioned marriage.

At first she had thought it was because he made so little money. But lately he had had many commissions for illustrations and book jackets. He couldn't consider himself a penniless artist any longer. It must be that he just didn't want the responsibilities of marriage.

It wasn't fair. He knew that she loved him. He knew that she wasn't the least little bit interested in anyone else. He took it for granted that she would always be at home when he came over in the evenings. In each gesture and attitude he showed everyone who came to her apartment that she belonged to him.

"People probably think I'm his mistress," she told herself, anger flaring up in her. "I wish I were! That would be better than this uncertainty."

George Evans was saying, "But how can we keep out of it? The thing's too big. It will inevitably suck us in."

"You're talking like a fool," Paul answered, with the freedom of long friendship. "Why should we stick our neck out?"

"It isn't a question of sticking our necks out," George retorted hotly. "It could very well be a question of self-defense."

"Well, I know one thing," Paul said, "and that is that precious few of us will trot overseas again to save the world for democracy. I, for one, would flatly refuse."

"And be thrown into jail for a slacker?"

"Oh, I'd get out of it some way," Paul said, waving his cocktail glass.

And he would, too, Margo thought. But she was not paying much attention to their argument. She was remembering that George liked her.

"I might try the old jealousy dodge," she told herself. "It's recommended in all the lovelorn columns. Paul's too sure of me."

The trouble was that he was sure of George Evans, too. The two men had been close friends for years. Paul was pleased rather than worried that George liked her.

A reckless desperation was growing in her. She couldn't go on this way much longer.

While the war talk eddied about her she sat quietly on the sofa and plotted one scheme after another. But in the end she discarded them all. She loved Paul too deeply and her love was too honest to deceive him in any way.

There was only one thing to do, and that was to put her problem squarely up to him.

"I've got to propose to him," she thought unhappily. "And if he refuses me, it is the end."

She looked down into her empty glass and saw a bleak, gray future with no Paul to charm away its drabness. And she couldn't bear it.

THE guests were standing up, talking of leaving. Margo rose quickly, refilled her glass from the cocktail shaker and drank the drink down. That still didn't give her the courage she needed, so she started to pour another.

Paul's hand closed over hers on the shaker, and his voice said behind her, "Please don't."

She turned around to stare at him. He was not usually a dictator.

He repeated, "Not tonight, Margo," and helplessly she put down her glass. If only she didn't love him so! She couldn't put him to the test yet. She couldn't risk losing him.

"Let's all go on to the Shack for dinner," George suggested.

"Not tonight," Paul said. "Margo and I have a special date."

She didn't know in the least what he was talking about, but she smiled and pretended that she did, as she told the crowd goodby.

"Well, see you at the front," George joked as he left.

Paul grinned. "Not me."

They were alone at last, alone with the scattered empty glasses and the cracker crumbs on the carpet and the stale cigarette smoke. Just as if they were married.

Margo turned away from him, her face tight and her lips thin. How long could it go on? How long before she could find the courage to end it?

She stood at the window, gazing into the dusk with unseeing eyes. Behind her she heard him gathering up the dirty glasses and carrying the trays to the kitchenette. He came back with the sweeper and went quickly over the carpet.

She heard him straightening chairs, and knew when he lit a match to the wood piled in the fireplace. But still she did not turn around.

At last he said, "Margo?"

She turned then and faced him. In the leaping firelight his features were sharp-cut, familiar and dear. And yet she seemed to look at him from across a bottomless chasm.

"Yes?" she said.

"Can you be ready to be married next week?"

She stood very still, her eyes searching his through the dusk of the room. Just a few little words, and he said them so casually. It was as simple as that.

She said, as if she had known all along that he would say them sometime, "Next week? Oh, my dear!"

They met somewhere near the middle of the carpet, and she was in his arms, being kissed thoroughly, with a lingering tenderness.

Miraculously, all the tight, dark misery that she had carried with her these past months dissolved completely. She felt light-hearted and buoyantly happy.

"I thought perhaps Wednesday," he said. "That all right?"

"Wednesday?" she echoed. This was Saturday.

She began to laugh.

"What is it, darling?" he said, still holding her close to him.

"Oh, Paul, you're so funny!" she said. "You've never mentioned getting married before. Not once. And now you want to do it in four days. What's the hurry, darling?"

"That's a fine note," he complained. "A man asks his girl to marry him, and she says 'What's the hurry'?"

She laughed with him. It all seemed laughable now, all her fears and foolish worries. "But what is the hurry?" she persisted.

"This," he said, bending his head. "I love you," he whispered, and his lips found hers again, clinging in such eager, entreating passion that she trembled with ecstasy.

"I love you," she murmured. "Oh, my dear, how I love you—"

THEY were married on Wednesday, without fuss or formality, in a quiet little church near where Margo lived. She was radiant in the new blue

suit she had bought for the occasion, with Paul's white orchids pinned on her shoulder, and bright stars in her eyes.

She was all packed for a honeymoon, but Paul would not tell her where they were going. He said it was a surprise, and he meant to save it for a wedding present.

She loved him to death. He looked so handsome, so gay, so utterly lovable in his dark suit, with his dark hair breaking away from the careful smoothness he had tried to impose on it.

George Evans was best man, and Margo's friend, Kay Loring, was her maid of honor. Others of their crowd were present at the brief ceremony. When it was over they all went to Margo's apartment to drink to her happiness and wish them bon voyage.

She was still in a daze of unbelief. It was like a miracle, a dream come true, and she had been so busy getting ready for it, that she had had no time to realize it yet.

Back in her room for a brief moment alone, she pinched herself lightly.

"Yes, it's I," she whispered. "Mrs. Paul Jannssen. It must be true!"

She touched her lips with more color and gave a wholly unnecessary brushing to her pale brown hair, then went out of the bedroom and down the hall to her living room.

In the doorway she stopped, looking over the gay scene with happy eyes, waiting until Paul should catch sight of her and come forward to meet her.

He was talking to George, who was saying, "Well, I see you aren't taking any chances on being drafted into army service."

"No." Paul laughed. "I've got a family now. They'll have to find someone else for cannon fodder."

The casual words rang in Margo's ears. She tried to dismiss them from her mind and enter into the gaiety. But she couldn't. She just stood still, remembering.

Remembering that all the week she had been rushing to get ready for this day, the headlines had been black and alarming about war. Remembering that Paul had said he wouldn't fight, that he'd got out of it some way.

The words buzzed round and round in her head, growing larger and larger until they were just like big black headlines themselves.

Was that why he had been in such a hurry to get married? Because he thought it might save him from being called to do army service? It seemed likely. He had seemed content with his bachelorhood for so long.

She was trembling and her hands felt very cold. She crossed the room to stand beside him. Her voice was gay and light, but it sounded like someone else's voice to her own ear.

"So that's why you married me, Paul," she said. "To keep from being drafted."

He put an arm around her, drawing her close. "Of course that's why I married you!" he answered, laughing. "Why did you think?"

George laughed, and the others near them laughed. Margo didn't know whether she laughed or not. All the old fears and worries were sweeping over her again. All the reasons why she had thought Paul was never going to propose.

An artist always wanted to be free. Paul was different from her. All his friends were different. He didn't like the ordinary, conventional things she had been brought up on. He wouldn't like domesticity. It would bore and distract him.

But even more than he disliked

domesticity, he hated the idea that he might have to go to war.

That strange tight lump was rising in her throat again, so painful that tears started to her eyes.

"It's just that I was handy," she thought. "I'd become a habit. He doesn't love me at all. Not the way I love him."

The hurt of it was driving her crazy. In another minute she would start screaming at him. She pulled out of his arm. He was still talking over the European situation with George, and he gave her only a sidewise glance when she left.

Deliberately she walked out of the living room, and went back to her bedroom. A Pullman case was lying open on the bed. She closed it and put on her hat. She found the bag that matched her shoes and looked mechanically to see if it contained her money.

Scarcely a moment had passed before she was out in the hall again, carrying her Pullman case. She stood still a moment, listening to the sounds of gaiety that came from the living room. Apparently no one had missed her.

Swiftly she turned into the kitchen and left through the back door. She hurried down the service steps, not really aware of what she was hurrying away from. She could never run away from the pain in her heart.

She gained the street and hailed a taxi. "To the station," she said.

Once inside the cab she had a fit of violent trembling. Paul would miss her, soon. Perhaps even now he was going to her bedroom, tapping on the door, finding no answer.

That picture caused her pain, and yet she could not go back. She was too upset to face anyone just now. She had only one desire, and that was to get away, as far as she could.

At the station she bought a ticket for her sister's, three hundred miles distant.

The trip was afterward a total blank in her memory. She was in a daze. The journey was not one of mileposts and landmarks, but one of milling, confused thoughts and a pyramid of pains.

She was utterly exhausted when the train rolled into her sister's town. She stumbled to a telephone, and presently Lia was running toward her in the station, her outstretched arms a haven of comfort.

Lia didn't ask questions. She took Margo home and put her to bed with a glass of warm milk.

Afterward, just as she was dozing off, Margo heard her sister go to the telephone and stealthily call Paul. But by that time she was too nearly unconscious to care.

HE WAS there when she woke up in the morning. She opened her eyes in Lia's gay little spare room and heard his voice mingled with the voices of Lia and her husband, Bill, out on the breakfast porch.

Margo's heart began to thump alarmingly. She lay still and tried to go back to sleep, but it was too late now. The thoughts had started milling round in her head again.

It wasn't enough to have Paul love her a little. It wasn't enough that he had chosen her instead of someone else when he wanted a wife. She wanted more than that. She wanted him to feel that he couldn't live without her, not just that he had to be married.

She was getting more wretched by the minute, so she finally rose and dressed. She made her face up carefully, brushing her hair until it shone.

The dress she slipped into was a

sage-green woolen she had expected to wear on her honeymoon. Paul had never seen it.

But he did not notice it now. His eyes held a bewildered hurt and an uncertainty that had never been there before. She felt viciously glad that she had shaken his sureness of her.

"Hello," she said, and her casualness seemed to shake him even more.

Lia and Bill slipped away, leaving them alone together.

"Margo," Paul said, and half lifted his hands. "I—can't understand. Do you want to tell me why you did it?"

"Yes," she said. "Perhaps I should be flattered that you preferred me to a gun. But I'm not."

"A gun?" A look of blank, incredulous surprise crossed his face. "Did you say a *gun?*"

Bitterness crept into her voice. "Yes," she said. "A gun. The badge of army service. It was nice of you to prefer me to the army, but I'm afraid that isn't quite enough."

Comprehension was beginning to filter into his expression. "George and I were only joking. Surely you know that."

"Sometimes the truth comes out that way," she said bitterly. "Sometimes you learn things from a joke, that you knew all along but hated to believe."

"Margo!" he cried.

"It's true," she said. "You were content to let things go on as they were until everyone started talking war, and you realized that you might have to fight. Then you wanted a wife. And I happened to be handy."

He looked stunned. He opened his mouth, but she rushed on.

"I want more than that! I want a man who loves me, who can't live without me."

"Margo!" he cried again, holding out his hands. "Can you really be saying these things? You married me yesterday. Can you really doubt my love?"

"You don't love me as I love you," she said, heartbroken but stubborn.

He groaned, "For Pete's sake—" His arms reached for her, and his head bent to capture her lips.

But she twisted away from his kiss. "You can't prove anything that way," she said.

He was suddenly angry. She saw it in the narrowing of his dark eyes and the tightened twist of his lips.

"Okay!" he said, his voice harsh. "I don't love you as much as you love me. So now what?"

She stared at him. It had seemed that her heart held all it could of pain, but new pain cut sharply through it now.

She thought, "It's true, then. It's true!" And realized that in spite of her stubbornness, she had been hoping all along to be convinced.

She could not trust her voice to speak. She was on the verge of breaking down. So she made a little shrugging gesture with her shoulders and her hands. It looked far more casual than anything she could have said.

Paul's face reddened. "All right," he said. "If that's the way you want it." And he turned his back on her and walked out of the room.

Margo stood still, her heart pounding so loud that she thought the sound must surely follow him. But she didn't realize he really meant to leave until she heard the slam of the outside door.

"Paul!" she cried, dashing through the house and flinging the door open. She was just in time to see his car drive furiously off. "Oh, Paul!" she sobbed again, and crumpled down on the steps.

THREE days passed, three long, miserable, lonely days. Margo hoped against hope that he would come back, and when he didn't it seemed overwhelming proof that he didn't love her. A fierce, resentful pride began to stir in her.

She felt she must go back and show him that she didn't care, either.

She bade her worried sister goodby and took the train to the city. In the back of her mind was the thought of George, and it was strangely comforting.

George liked her. He'd never said much, but she had known it all along. Perhaps he would help her save her pride.

She called him from the apartment after she had rested and bathed. Her voice was a little wobbly, her laugh uncertain, for seeing her little home again had brought too many sharply painful memories of the husband who had walked out on her.

But she tried to be gay. "Hello, George! I'm back in circulation again."

"Margo? When did you get here?" he asked politely, as if he had not heard the last part of her remark.

"Just now," she said. "I thought maybe you would like to come up and —help me celebrate."

"Celebrate what?" he asked, and this time there was no mistaking the dry disapproval in his voice.

Suddenly Margo was crying. "I'm sorry," she said. "I'm—so miserable."

"I'll be right up," George said.

She cried hard for a few moments after she had hung up, and then she dried her eyes and washed her face again. This was no way to salvage her pride. George would tell Paul exactly how she felt. He was the last person in the city she should have chosen, if she was going to take down her hair.

He was soberer than she could ever remember seeing him, when he came.

She took his hat and said, with a bright, defiant pride. "If you tell Paul that I cried, I'll—I'll—"

"I won't be telling him anything," George said sternly. "And neither will you."

She stared at him, her eyes widening. "Wh-why?"

He shrugged and turned away from her. "Just that he's leaving town."

With deliberate care he selected a cigarette and lighted it. The room was so still that the noise made by the match when he struck it sounded like a small explosion. There was something in his manner that frightened her.

Margo put a hand on his arm. "Where's he going?" she whispered.

For a moment he ignored the question. She repeated it, her mouth feeling dry. At last he swung on her, and his eyes were accusing and his mouth bitter.

"He's sailing for England. He's going to enlist in the Royal Air Force."

"The—Royal—Air—Force!" she gasped. "But *why?*"

"Apparently," George said, and his voice was hard, "because you made it clear that you think he's afraid to fight."

Margo cried, "But he'll be killed!"

"He doesn't seem to care much," was the answer.

There was a long silence. Margo's eyes were very wide, and her voice when she spoke was little more than a breath. "Does he—care that much—for me?"

George whirled on her, his face black with anger. "Yes, he does—if it's of any interest to you! And why he does, I can't see! You've certainly messed up his life. He's not only thrown up a perfect plum of a job;

he's thrown up his whole career. And he was one of our most promising—"

"What job?" she interrupted tensely.

"I forgot that you didn't know," George said, a little more quietly. "He got the contract for illustrating a new travel book on Mexico. He had tickets for both of you. He was supposed to leave at once for Guadalajara."

"Tickets for both of us," Margo repeated, her face as pale as death. Suddenly she saw everything—everything. "That was his surprise. That was why he wanted to be married in such a hurry."

She looked stunned and so white that George put a steadying hand under her elbow.

But only for a moment. She roused herself, her small figure galvanized. "Where is he now?" she demanded. "Has he left yet?"

"It's too late," George told her. "He's terribly bitter. He won't listen to you."

"Where is he?"

"No telling. His train leaves at five-fifteen."

"Are you going to see him off?"

"He asked me not to."

"Will you drive me to the station?"

"Sure," George said, without much hopefulness. But Margo was already out of the room.

SHE changed quickly to traveling clothes, and returned carrying the trousseau bag she had packed three days ago.

George took it from her, and in silence they left the apartment and descended to his car.

When they had nearly reached the station, Margo said, "Don't hate me, George. I had a bad case of jitters, but I'm all right now. I'll make him happy. I swear it."

"I believe you, Margo. I'm sorry I flew off the handle back there. And if you can persuade him to stay out

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of that hell, I'll cheer you forever. We need fellows like him at home."

They drew up at the station and George gave her bag to a porter. "I'll stay out of this, I think," he said. "Good luck!"

Margo wanted to fly down the arched entrance, but she forced herself to walk sedately and not to search the corners too openly. Paul had not come yet. She was a little early. She sat down to wait.

She saw him before he saw her. Hungrily, she studied him, wondering how she had ever thought she could let him go. It didn't matter why he wanted her near him. The important thing was that he wanted her.

He looked up and saw her, came straight to her across the marble floor. It was just five minutes before train time.

"Hello, Margo," he said. "Going somewhere?" He was very pale, and his eyes were tired and hungry on her face.

She nodded. "I'm going to England."

He started. "To England!"

"Yes," she said. "They—they'll need some nurses over there, won't they?"

He hesitated. "Yes," he said. "Yes, I guess they will."

"And perhaps," Margo said very low, "I will be near you."

He sat down beside her and took her hands. "Look at me," he said urgently. "Do you really want to be near me?"

Her eyes when she raised them, were full of tears. "It's all I want," she whispered. "Please believe me. I've been a fool, Paul, but it was only because I love you so terribly that I can't —can't use my head. Oh, darling, I waited so long for you to say, 'Let's be married,' that when you did I couldn't believe—I had to search for a reason. Paul, tell me you understand."

His answer was eloquent, but it was not formed of words. The porter carrying his bags stood his distance, grinning broadly. Margo's porter winked at him. And all over the station people saw the small, light-haired girl in the dark young man's arms and smiled.

"Paul," she said breathlessly, when she could. "You're not going to leave me now—to fight, are you?"

His eyes were shining and excited, and his old assurance had returned.

"They can have their war," he said. "I've got two tickets to Heaven."

"Then let's be starting," Margo whispered, and raised her lips again, oblivious of everything outside the circle of his arms.

"I Talked with God"

(Yes, I Did—Actually and Literally)

and, as a result of that little talk with God some ten years ago, a strange new Power came into my life. After 43 years of horrible, sickening, dismal failure, this strange Power brought to me a sense of overwhelming victory, and I have been overcoming every undesirable condition of my life ever since. What a change it was. Now—I have credit at more than one bank, I own a beautiful home, drive a lovely car, own a newspaper and a large office building, and my wife and family are amply provided for after I leave for shores unknown. In addition to these material benefits, I have a sweet peace in my life. I am happy as happy can be. No circumstance ever upsets me, for I have learned how to draw upon the invisible God-Law, under any and all circumstances.

You, too, may find and use the same staggering Power of the God-Law that I use. It can bring to you, too, whatever things are right and proper for you to have. Do you believe this? It won't cost much to find out—just a penny post-card or a letter, addressed to Dr. Frank B. Robinson, Dept. 114, Moscow, Idaho, will bring you the story of the most fascinating success of the century. And the same Power I use is here for your use, too. I'll be glad to tell you about it. All information about this experience will be sent you free, of course. The address again—Dr. Frank B. Robinson, Dept. 114, Moscow, Idaho. Advt. Copyright 1939 Frank B. Robinson.

Your Pen Personality

By HELEN KING

"KNOW thyself" is an old adage, and one which holds true for all time. Today, when many of us are changing our ideas and beliefs, it pays to check up on ourselves. If suddenly called upon to analyze yourself, could you do it?

Here is a brief way of analyzing some traits. Read the following questions, then look at your own handwriting. The answer will appear there, in your own writing, for your own honest analysis.

Are you impulsive? Do you act on the spur of the moment because something appeals to you? Or do you stop to figure a thing out, calmly and cautiously? Impulsive people use a forward leaning writing, a bit splashy, with uncertain strokes, as in the first of the ten samples shown here:

Impulsive style

stubborn, dogmatic

that

meticulous

colorless

am always discouraged

I do not - I

much too emotional

chatty and gossip

antagonistic

Are you dogmatic? Do you tenaciously hang on to your own thoughts and try to force them on others? Example 2 gives you a picture of the person who fits the answer to the question; even the writing looks stubborn.

Are you determined to have your own way? Do you ride roughshod over people without considering their feelings? Example 3 shows the girl or boy who does this.

Are you meticulous? Careful about details? Inclined to be fussy? The care in writing shown in Example 4 is the give-away. This trait is usually found in older people.

Are you colorless? Do you lack "oomph" or any other words describing personality? Colorless writing, devoid of that which sells a person to the world, is shown in Example 5. There are thousands who use

this style, partly because they have yet to come out of their shells.

Are you a defeatist? Before attempting something are you discouraged? Repressed individuals, those who have suffered through no fault of their own, and those who always feel licked, may find an expression of themselves in Example 6.

Are you conceited? Do you think you're a big shot in your own place? In fact, someone the world should appreciate more? If your writing looks like Example 7, your family and friends must find it tough living with you, unless they've a sense of humor.

Are you emotional? Do you judge according to your feelings rather than your common sense? If you let your heart, rather than your head, control you, Example 8 will give you away. If you find yourself in this category, don't serve on a jury, for though your intentions may be good, you'll let your feelings get your judgment all muddled up. The prisoner who "looks nice to his mother," although guilty, would be freed by you folks. And you'd do it in all sincerity.

Are you a gossip? Do you repeat confidences told you, and tell things of a personal nature about others? If your writing looks like Example 9, you can rest assured that your neighbors fear your tongue. Close up those letters, and by concentrating on it you may remember to keep a closer watch on your tongue.

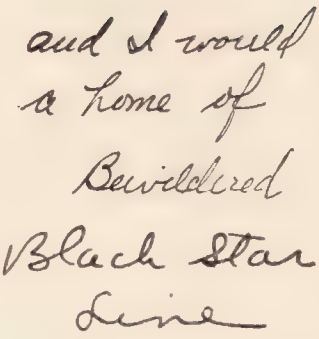
Are you antagonistic toward others? Do you carry a chip on your shoulder? If Example 10 looks like your writing, you may answer in the affirmative. Touchy, and tense, is the nature having this style.

DEAR MISS KING:

Six years ago I was married secretly to a man of a different faith. His family is dependent on him, and do not realize he may want a life of his own. We are both over 35.

Is it too much to want a home and a husband with me after so many years? If I say much I'm called "dramatic," simply because I have had some success in selling stories. Please help me.

BEWILDERED



Your first mistake was in keeping the marriage a secret. Of course you probably expected to announce it some time ago, but now you see the error of your ways. You thus have two courses to follow to bring about a change in conditions. I purposely omitted parts of your letter, but you will understand the following.

First, you can rectify your mistake by immediately announcing your marriage. The initiative will have to be on your part as your husband is a nice, but lackadaisical sort of fellow. He is somewhat weak, and keeps putting off unpleasant tasks. This would be "unpleasant" to him because of the shock it might cause his family. But you have allowed this to prey on your mind, so drastic action is imperative. It might mean skimping and saving for a while, but the results, if you still love him, will be worth it.

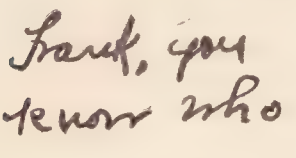
Secondly, a stiff jolt might bring that man to his senses. Tell him frankly (without "dramatics") that you are going away and will not return unless it is as his wife. A good letting-alone might do the work. Don't be harsh; just state facts. You have the right to expect the protection and companionship of your husband. You have the right to be acknowledged as his wife. If he doesn't see you for a while he may wake up. And if he doesn't come to life, he apparently doesn't want a married life.

You may have seen too much of him. You may have said too many things. Now your course is to act quietly. He will probably think you are fooling, so it is up to you to show you are not.

DEAR MISS KING:

When at a party, I never run after my husband if he is talking to other girls, but if I get talking to other men, right away Frank is at my heels, listening, looking glum and feeling sorry for himself. I wish I knew why this is. It certainly can't be a twisted form of devotion, can it? Here is his writing.

MARY E.



Yes, it is devotion — self-devotion. Jealousy, in some people, comes out in queer ways. When Frank sees you having a good time without him, his vanity is wounded. "Imagine the little wife being happy when her master isn't around" is the idea that starts the glum-proceedings.

Of course it is different when he talks to the girls. He *knows* that they don't mean anything to him, but he doesn't know about you! He doubts his own ability to hang on to you, and seeing you with other men worries him. Don't be too harsh on him, for the trait itself is torture, and punishment.

DEAR MISS KING:

In 1936 you analyzed me. Have I changed any?

E. F. C.

Even the memory of an elephant wouldn't be able to solve that problem. The best thing to do is to send me a recent analysis to compare with the 1936 reading. You see, thousands of letters have passed over this desk in the past three years, so I really can't remember one particular specimen of writing.

DEAR MISS KING:

Should a girl marry a man she doesn't love? My parents say that love comes after marriage, but they are from the old country and I am an American. Is it my duty to obey them?

PAVLA

Your first duty is to be true to yourself. Your parents probably were happily married, through their parents choosing, but the girl of today, especially in this country, is independent in thought. Marriage with one you love is a series of adjustments. Marriage with one you do not love must be unbearable.

Talk to your parish priest. Ask him if you should promise to "love" when you know you would be lying. Have him speak to your parents in your behalf, but have all this done without hurting them.

You do owe them that. You owe them respect, consideration and loyalty. They probably think they are acting in your best interests, so respect them for that. Explain to them that you do not feel ready for marriage, and that you do not think it fair to the man of their choice to enter into such a sacred union, feeling the way you do.

DEAR MISS KING:

I am a German, in the country now for eight years. The recent war outbreak has made me a target for abuse in the town where I work. I am manager of a chain grocery store. If I retaliate, I may lose business for the company; if I don't, I am wrongly accused, for I am taking out my papers, and I love America. I do not know what to do.

WALTER K.

If conditions become intolerable, and some small town minds can make that such, communicate with your supervisor, and tell him the situation. Ask to be transferred to another place where you can continue to serve in the company's interests. If your record is good you won't have much trouble, for it will be to the company's advantage as much as yours.

Meanwhile, don't let yourself be drawn into any arguments. Some persons might taunt you, just to get you to talk. Be too busy to discuss anything, even if you just shift boxes around.

Coming: Three on a Kiss by Virginia Nielsen

Your Lucky Star

By KEVAH BROWN

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What Will 1940 Mean to You?

IN THE last issue we foretold the coming year for natives of the first seven signs of the zodiac; this time we will discuss the remaining five signs. But first a word in general.

If your horoscope, or road map of life, is afflicted at one point, do not despair. It is often at the same time under a friendly planetary influence at some other point. For instance, we may at one and the same time have great financial difficulties and a beautiful love affair; or just the opposite. So don't resign yourself to a dreadful time under some difficult aspect; remember there are always at the same time some mitigating circumstances, some good aspects.

Last time we talked about the disciplining planet Saturn. The planet Jupiter has just the opposite effect on your life. It is called the great benefic, because when it is transiting your sign, it means you will benefit financially to a considerable extent, and that you will feel in better health than you have for a long time; in fact, you will have a general sense of well-being.

Most people have to guard against gaining weight during the reign of Jupiter in their charts, because this planet tends to give a feeling of opulence, and one eats and drinks too well under its spell.

And now for the forecasts.

You natives of Scorpio, born between October 23 and November 21, will have considerable opposition during 1940, with the exception of a few days in the sign. But you are usually strong enough to "take it." You will need all your patience in relationship to your marriage or business partners. But (and here is, as usual, the mitigating circumstance) some of your friends will be helpful in strange and unsought ways.

Be especially careful early in the year, if your birthday comes on October 24, but shortly afterward there will be improvement in your affairs.

If you were born early in November you should have a successful year financially, especially toward the fall months of 1940. Those who were born on November 6 should have happiness in romance next summer.

People born on the eleventh and twelfth of this month should avoid making changes of any sort, especially during the first part of the year. Those celebrating the sixteenth and seventeenth may look for real happiness next August and September. November should bring prosperity and even some happiness in love for those who came into the world on the twentieth and twenty-first.

The first half of 1940 will be fortunate for the Sagittarians (born between November 22 and December 22) and will bring new opportunities to most of them. There will be unexpected gains, and helpful attitudes from younger people and children. The latter half of the year will not be as successful; nevertheless, it will not be too difficult a period.

The first three months of the year are an excellent time for those celebrating birthdays between November 22 and 26. Those born during the latter part of November should guard against being too impulsive and impatient at this time; also they should be careful of what they put into writing.

If you have a birthday during the first few days of December you will have an interesting year, the early part bringing good fortune where the opposite sex is concerned, even if a bit stormy and tempestuous.

Courtship, marriage and happy events in the spring and summer months are due for those born between the eighth and twelfth. You will also experience an eventful year if you were born on the nineteenth, twentieth or twenty-first of December, but be on your guard against possible deception during the latter part of the year.

Were you born between December 23 and January 20? Then you are a native of the sign of Capricorn. You are among those who should be especially fortunate during 1940. There will be gains through speculation for many of you, and all dealings with property in general will be favorable.

Those who were born around Christmas Day will have financial gains, but should nevertheless be careful of some fraud and deception regarding money, especially during the spring. If you were born on the twenty-ninth don't make unnecessary changes in business or environment next summer; and if on the thirty-first, take care that your employees do not pilfer, whether in the home or business.

If New Year's Day is your birth-

day you may find life somewhat trying during the first months of 1940, unless restraint is exercised, but better times follow later in the year. Propitious indeed is the year for those who celebrate the fifth, sixth or fifteenth of January.

If you were born near the end of the sign, on the nineteenth or twentieth, your good time will come in October and November, And do be tactful with elderly people at this time, if you would come out a winner.

You Aquarius natives (born between January 1 and February 19) must be careful this year in all financial deals, especially regarding property, as there may be some depreciation or difficulties regarding mortgages. Perhaps you branched out too much last year under your Jupiter aspects; this year be more conservative, especially in regard to your domestic affairs.

You will, however, find strangers, or people you know only slightly, most cooperative, even to a romantic degree.

If you were born on January 21, 22 or 23, you will not feel the restrictions mentioned at the beginning of the year, which should be a successful one for you. Those who were born between January 25 and 27 should have happy heart interests in the spring, and gain through powerful friends.

Changes of residences should be avoided by those born around February 1 unless absolutely necessary, while those with birthdays on the seventh and eighth have their unfavorable time at the beginning of the year. You who were born near the eleventh of the month, should not sign documents without careful consideration, especially during May.

The most favorable aspects in general for natives of this sign are for those born on the sixteenth and seventeenth. The spring and summer months are particularly auspicious for them.

Natives of the last sign of the zodiac, Pisces (between February 20 and March 20) should have a favorable time this year, although with ups and downs financially. You will gain especially through the collaboration of friends and dear ones.

Those born in the first three days of this sign should make gains in business in the early spring.

Your natural intuitions, which most Pisceans possess to a great degree, will be working well if your date is

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the twenty-sixth or twenty-seventh of February. Rely on them, and conserve your financial resources until later in the year, when things will be more active for you.

Natives of the latter part of February and early March will find the second half of the year better than the first half, especially in regard to finance. Romance will flourish during the summer for most of you.

Make changes during the late summer or early fall months, if you were born on the sixth; while those born on the seventh, eighth and ninth of March will have some unexpected gains early in the year.

People with birthdays from the twelfth of March to the middle of the month must remember to be particularly tactful with their parents and elders this year; the fall months will be excellent for business and money affairs in general. The same is true for those who were born in the last days of the sign, especially in regard to finance.

Remember that sometimes a friendly warning is as good as a boost. If we use caution during any difficult aspect we can come out unscathed. After all, "life is experience," and if we suffered no reverses we would be the most negative and uninteresting of human beings.

Nothing, either good or bad, lasts forever you know. And just as surely as the sun shines, so will a good aspect follow a bad one. The principal thing is to harmonize with what life offers us, and astrology can help us to a better understanding of ourselves, and our experience.

The Lonesome Circle

Conducted by DOROTHEA DALE

MAKE FRIENDS! JOIN THE LONESOME CIRCLE!

WRITE your plea for pals to Mrs. Dale, in care of ALL-STORY—LOVE, 280 Broadway, New York, N. Y. When you write to other pals, enclose a plain, stamped envelope and tell Mrs. Dale for whom your letter is intended. Be sure to sign your full name and address. Girls may write only to girls; boys may write only to boys.

(Canadian readers, please send U. S. stamps, or coin. Readers from all other foreign countries should send International Reply Coupon, properly stamped by post office.)

Dear Mrs. Dale:

We are three Jewish girls from England who are very eager to join your Lonesome Circle. We are feeling very lonely in these days of war and blackouts and would be very happy to make some American pen pals.

Mildred, the eldest, is 21 years old, tall, slim and fair. Freda is 18. She is tall, dark and is a professional model. Rosa, the youngest, is 14 years old and has just come back from the country where she was evacuated. She is 5 feet 6 inches tall and weighs about 100 pounds.

So anyone from the age of 15 to 28 please write to us, and chase our blues away. Don't let us down America!

The Threesome. (5c postage)

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WANTS YANKEE PALS. I'm 15 years of age, 5 feet 5 inches tall and weigh 112 pounds. My hobbies are: skating, cycling, collecting stamps, sports of all kinds and athletics. I'll exchange snaps with anyone who is willing to write to an English girl and I promise to answer every letter received. I like the movies and am very fond of writing. Please, everyone, write to me and tell me the news from the United States!

Mary, England. (5c postage)

THE MORE THE MERRIER! I want some sincere pen pals. I'm 40 years old and am 6 feet 2 inches tall. My hair is dark, my eyes gray, and I am considered tolerant, cheerful and friendly. Promise to answer all letters and exchange snaps.

Bob of Kansas.

MY FINGERS ARE CROSSED. I do hope that there is no age limit for joining the Lonesome Circle as I am 60. I enjoy writing and receiving letters very much and would like to hear from those near my own age.

Western Widow.

DROP HIM A LINE. I'm a young man interested in all kinds of sports, both winter and summer. I enjoy good friendship. Occasionally I like to take in a show or go for a ride in my car through the country. So far I am a bachelor and expect to remain one for awhile, anyway. I would like to hear from fellows in and around New York City.

Pal of Westchester

A WEE NOTE, PLEASE. I am a girl of 16 who would like to correspond with someone about my own age in America or Canada. I have my pen all waiting for my new friends. Age really doesn't make any difference to me, so please take pity on a lonely Scots girl.

Evelyn of Glasgow. (5c postage)

ANOTHER NEWFOUNDLANDER. I'm a married woman with five children. I've been married 21 years. My hair is black, my eyes blue. I weigh 120 pounds and am 5 feet 4½ inches tall. My hobbies are knitting, sewing and mat hooking. I would like to receive letters from pen pals both old and young everywhere

Mrs. J. P. of Middle Arm.

TRAVEL CONSCIOUS. Who will write to a college student anxious for a full mail bag? Am a young man of 23, 5 feet 6 inches tall, with brown hair and eyes. I'm interested in practically everything you can write about, especially travel. I'd like letters from New York and Buffalo.

Marshall of Kingston.

GIRL OF THE NORTH. I am a Newfoundland girl 16 years old. I have brown hair and eyes, am 5 feet 2 inches tall, and am in Grade 8 in school. There are ten of us in the family. My favorite hobbies are dancing, sewing and knitting. I have two sheep for pets. Their

names are Bet and Nan. Come on pals, please write to me!

Curly Head.

HERE'S ANOTHER MEMBER. I am from good old New Orleans! Am 5 feet 2½ inches tall, with brown eyes and hair. I go in for almost every type of sport there is and like to dance very much. I promise to answer all letters received promptly. I'll also exchange pictures with anyone who wants to.

Wilton of La.

A SCOTCH LASSIE. I'm 14 years old. I have brown hair and eyes and am 5 feet 2 inches tall. Am very fond of sports and games. I'd like to hear from girls of about my age and promise to answer all letters that come to me. So give me a try, please!

Mildred of Scotland. (5c postage)

HELLO, EVERYBODY! I'm a young man of 23. I work on a farm in the land of peaches and honey—good old western Ontario! I like to go to the beach in the summer and have a good time. I also enjoy reading, writing letters, car driving, and playing guitar and accordion music. If you too, are lonesome and want a friend, why not drop me a line?

Young Man of Kirkton.

SWEET SIXTEEN. I am a sophomore in high and want very many pen pals because I love to write letters to everyone far and near. Won't you all help to fill up my mailbox?

Lucille of Trenton.

HAILS FROM THE WHALING CITY. I am just a fellow who is seeking pals. Am 25 years old, 6 feet tall, with brown hair and blue eyes. I enjoy books, movies, music and writing. Let's get together, fellows!

Harry of New Bedford.

CALLING ALL PEN PALS. From all corners of the earth regardless of age, size, or disposition! I'm 18 years old with blue eyes and auburn hair. I have a temper as changeable as the weather. Have many hobbies but am always on the lookout for more. I like writing letters, collecting poetry, saving souvenirs, singing, dancing and acting. I adore the Dead End Kids. I also have a grand collection of picture post cards from all over the world. At present I write for a small paper. I promise to be a sincere correspondent. How about it? Will you give me a try?

Curly Top.

RANCHES ARE HER DISH. I am a girl of 14 who really would enjoy letters from all parts of the United States and foreign countries. I enjoy all sports and dancing. Will gladly send photos and snapshots of the World's Fair to the first writers. I would especially like to hear from people living on ranches in Texas and the West. I have auburn hair, brown eyes and am 5 feet 3½ inches tall. Let me hear from you and you!

Shirley of the Bronx.

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SICKNESS OR ACCIDENT

Thousands of people are disabled every hour of the day. Don't let sickness or accident find you unprepared.

WE PAY YOU CASH

$8,000.00 Accumulated Cash For Accidental Death
$8,000.00 Accumulated Cash For Loss of Hands, Eyes or Feet
$250.00 For Accidents
$200.00 For Sickness
$100.00 Financial Aid
All as specified in the Policy
COST TO YOU ONLY $1 MONTHLY

COSTS ONLY $1 PER MONTH

The **"Security" Sickness and Accident Policy** gives your family quick cash when income is stopped. Pays CASH protection of **$25.00 a week** up to ten weeks for accident—$25.00 **each week** for sickness, as specified in policy—and up to $8,000.00 for accidental death, loss of hands, eyes or feet. Also other liberal features. Examine this **new Security Policy** on our 10-day Free Inspection Offer!

NO PHYSICAL EXAMINATION

Any person may apply. Ages 16 to 75, man or woman. No physical examination. The Security Policy sold by mail. No agent will call. The Arcadia Mutual Casualty Company is a safe company—not an association or assessment company. It has the approval of the Illinois State Insurance Department.

SEND NO MONEY Just mail the coupon for complete information. You alone judge and decide. Don't wait until it's too late.

THE ARCADIA MUTUAL CASUALTY CO., Desk 28-A
75 East Wacker Drive, Chicago, Ill.
NO AGENT WILL CALL
"Please send me complete information and tell me how I may get the "Security" Policy for 10-Day Free Inspection without obligation.
Name_____
Address_____

Mental Poisoning!

Thoughts that Enslave Minds

Tortured souls. Human beings whose self-confidence and peace of mind have been torn to shreds by invisible darts—the evil thoughts of others. Can envy, hate and jealousy be projected through space from the mind of another? Do poisoned thoughts, like mysterious rays, reach through the ethereal realms to claim innocent victims? All of us, from day to day and hour to hour, in every walk of life, in every circumstance, are possible victims of mental poisoning, unless we understand its nature, and can quickly recognize its infectious innoculation.

This FREE Sealed Book

Do you know the strangest of all laws in man's body? Man's life, happiness, health, and enjoyment of the things of life depend on his understanding of the working of the human mind. Let the Rosicrucians explain how you may acquire an age-old method for mind development and the proper use of your latent inner powers. If sincere, write for the *free sealed book*. Address: Scribe A.U.F.

The ROSICRUCIANS
(AMORC)
San Jose, California

GUARANTEED TIRES!

GOODYEAR-GOODRICH FIRESTONE-U.S. and Other Standard Makes

World's Lowest TIRE PRICES

Tire users by the **thousands** all over the U.S.A. vouch for the **Long Hard Service** of our **Standard Brand** tires reconditioned with high grade materials and latest methods by our tire **experts. Our 21 years experience** makes it possible to offer tires at **lowest prices,** with **legal agreement** to replace at ½ price any tire that fails to give **12 Mos. Service.**

FREE! LANTERN With Every 2 Tires ordered

Complete with batteries and newest type reflector bulb. Ready for instant use. Strong, steady light. Useful everywhere. Order now.

EVERY TIRE GUARANTEED!

BALLOON TIRES

Size Rim	Tires	Tubes
29x4.40-21	$2.15	$1.05
29x4.50-20	2.35	1.05
30x4.50-21	2.40	1.15
28x4.75-19	2.45	1.25
29x4.75-20	2.50	1.25
29x5.00-19	2.85	1.25
30x5.00-20	2.85	1.25
5.25-17	2.90	1.35
28x5.25-18	2.90	1.35
29x5.25-19	2.95	1.35
30x5.25-20	2.95	1.35
31x5.25-21	3.25	1.35
5.50-17	3.35	1.40
28x5.50-18	3.35	1.40
29x5.50-19	3.35	1.45
6.00-17	3.40	1.40
30x6.00-18	3.40	1.40
31x6.00-19	3.40	1.45
32x6.00-20	3.45	1.55
33x6.00-21	3.65	1.55
32x6.50-20	3.75	1.75
6.00-16	3.75	1.45

REGULAR CORD TIRES

Size	Tires	Tubes
30x3½	$2.35	$0.95
31x4	2.95	1.25
32x4	2.95	1.25
33x4	2.95	1.25
34x4	3.25	1.35
32x4½	3.35	1.45

HEAVY DUTY TRUCK TIRES
(High Pressure)

Size	Tires	Tubes
30x5	$4.25	$1.95
33x5	3.95	1.75
34x5	4.25	2.25
32x6	7.95	2.95
36x6	9.95	4.45

TRUCK BALLOON TIRES

Size	Tires	Tubes
6.00-20	$3.75	$1.65
6.50-20	4.45	1.95
7.00-20	5.95	2.95

ALL OTHER SIZES

Size	Tires	Tubes
33x4½	$3.45	$1.45
34x4½	3.45	1.45
30x5	3.65	1.65
32x5	3.75	1.75
35x5	3.95	1.75

Size	Tires	Tubes
34x7	$10.95	$4.65
38x7	10.95	4.65
36x8	11.45	4.95
40x8	13.25	4.95

Size	Tires	Tubes
7.50-20	$6.95	$3.75
8.25-20	8.95	4.95
9.00-20	10.95	5.65
9.75-20	13.95	6.45

DEALERS WANTED

SEND ONLY $1.00 DEPOSIT on each tire ordered. ($3.00 on each Truck Tire.) We ship balance C. O. D. Deduct **5 per cent** if cash is sent in full with order. To fill order promptly we may substitute brands if necessary. ALL TUBES BRAND NEW—GUARANTEED—

PERRY-FIELD TIRE & RUBBER CO.
2328-38 S. Michigan Av., Dept. 4201-A, Chicago, Ill.

HE GETS AROUND. I'm a bachelor in the early 40's and have traveled extensively in the States. I enjoy sports and games of all sorts. My height is 5 feet 8 inches, my weight 213 pounds. By profession I am a newspaper and magazine writer and advertising man. Would be delighted to hear from anybody, anywhere, anytime.

L. A. R. of Washington.

GREETINGS! From Massachusetts. Here is another fair maiden who wishes to gain many friends from distant places. I shall be looking in my mailbox for letters from pals over the age of 15.

Evelyne of the Bay State.

SHE HAS A SUNNY DISPOSISH! I'm a girl of 16. I have blond hair and blue eyes. I'm 5 feet 2 inches tall and weigh 114 pounds. I am said to have a good disposition. Come on, girls, and keep my mailbox filled to the brim. I promise to answer all letters and will be able to furnish you interesting information of the state of Indiana where I live. I'll be especially glad to hear from foreign lands. Write one, write all, as I am interested in everybody and everything. I'll be waiting!

Smiling Terry.

PUT HIM ON YOUR LIST. I'm 30 years old, have dark hair, blue eyes and stand 5 feet 7 inches tall. I weigh 135 pounds. I've traveled in most of the States. I also like all sports and the theatre. I read a great many books. I'd like to hear from everyone, so come on and write!

Bob of Philly.

FRIENDLY INDEED! I'm a girl 13 years of age. My height is 5 feet 2 inches and my weight is 97 pounds. Hobbies are collecting movie star pictures, buttons, etc. Won't someone please drop me a line? Age doesn't matter.

Kentucky Mary.

WANTS JEWISH PALS. I'm a girl 19. I love all outdoor sports. I'd like to hear from girls all over the United States, especially Jewish girls. However, I enjoy writing and am looking forward to hearing from girls of other religions, too.

Irene of Roxbury.

ANXIOUSLY AWAITS. I'm a lonely young fellow in need of congenial pals. I'm interested in almost everything and shall try to prove myself an interesting pal. Give me a try and let me prove my worth.

Canadian Jo.

IS NURSING YOUR GOAL? I'm in the Eighth Grade and am 15 years old. My hair and eyes are brown. I am very fond of all kinds of sports and I love to dance. I've four brothers and two sisters, which makes quite a family. I intend to go in for nursing and I'd like to hear from other girls with the same ambition. Letters from everyone, young or old, married or single, will be answered promptly and greatly appreciated.

Miss Nightingale.

VIVID ACTION STORIES IN FULL COLOR ILLUSTRATIONS!

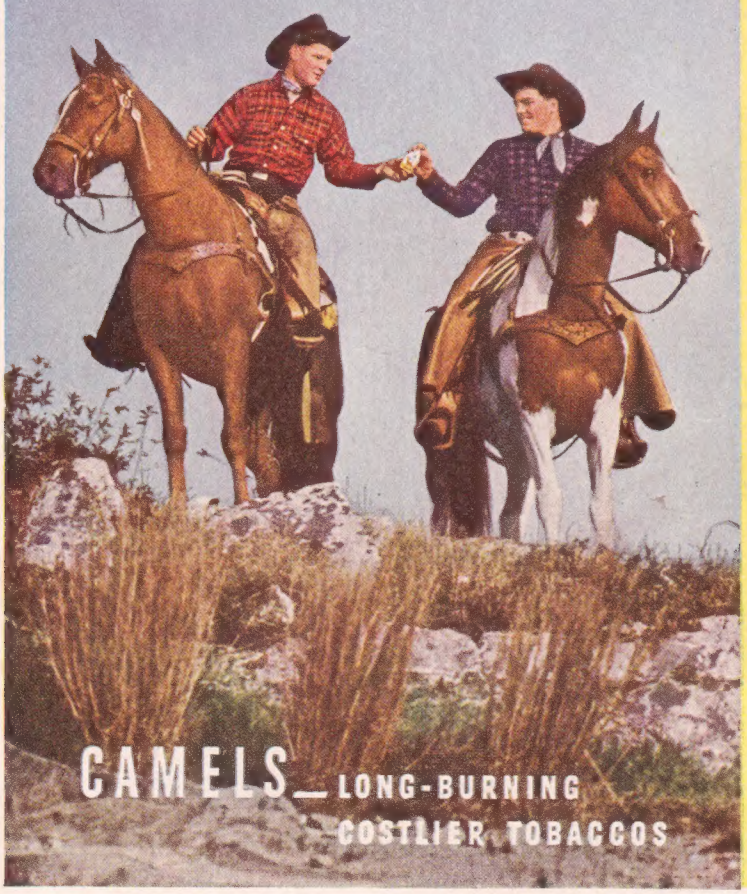
64 pages jammed and crammed full of thrill, adventure and action. For young and old alike. NOT just comics, but real he-man stories and pictures of dashing and daring. All stories and pictures complete. Big cash PRIZE contest. Get your copy now for an exciting evening of breath-taking experiences with POWER NELSON—The Man of the FUTURE; K—The Unknown; STORM CURTIS of the Coast Guards and many others.

GOOD FRIENDS AGREE—

"THERE'S EXTRA PLEASURE . . AND EXTRA SMOKING IN CAMELS!"

NORTH, East, South, West, you'll hear the same story: One true yardstick of cigarette pleasure is *slow* burning! Kenneth E. (Nick) Knight *(below, left)* confirms the experience of millions of smokers when he says: "One of the first things I noticed about Camels was their slow burning. I figure that's why Camels smoke so much cooler, milder and taste so much better." Howard McCrorey adds: "To me Camel's slow burning means extra pleasure and extra smoking per pack."

Yes, the *costlier tobaccos* in Camels are *slower-burning!* Enjoy extra pleasure and extra value in America's No. 1 cigarette...Camels!



CAMELS—LONG-BURNING COSTLIER TOBACCOS

Whatever price you pay per pack, it's important to remember this fact: By burning 25% *slower* than the average of the 15 other of the largest-selling brands tested—slower than *any* of them—CAMELS give a smoking *plus* equal to

5 EXTRA SMOKES PER PACK!

Cigarettes were compared recently...sixteen of the largest-selling brands . . . under the searching tests of impartial laboratory scientists. Findings were announced as follows:

1 CAMELS were found to contain MORE TOBACCO BY WEIGHT than the average for the 15 other of the largest-selling brands.

2 CAMELS BURNED *SLOWER* THAN ANY OTHER BRAND TESTED—25% SLOWER THAN THE AVERAGE TIME OF THE 15 OTHER OF THE LARGEST-SELLING BRANDS! By burning 25% slower, on the average, Camels give smokers the equivalent of 5 EXTRA SMOKES PER PACK!

3 In the same tests, CAMELS HELD THEIR ASH FAR *LONGER* than the average time for all the other brands.

MORE PLEASURE PER PUFF... MORE PUFFS PER PACK!

PENNY FOR PENNY YOUR BEST CIGARETTE BUY

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